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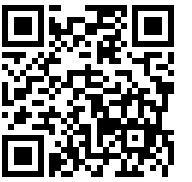

THE GOD TRUMP.

A NOVEL.

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THE ODD TRUMP.

A NOVEL.

VU

[George J. A. Coulson]

New York
E. J. HALE & SON, PUBLISHERS,
MURRAY STREET.
1875.

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TO

WILLIAM HAND BROWNE

THIS INITIAL VOLUME

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BY HIS OBLIGED FRIEND,

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PREFACE.

In the course of a journey from the border of fair Devon to the northern counties, it happened that a traveller was detained at Gloucester. He had arrived too late to catch the London train. The hours of compulsory delay were employed in explorations of the quaint old city and its suburbs; in loitering in the Cathedral, and listening to the grand anthem sung by an invisible choir, while the organ peals resounded among the ancient arches. The scenes and incidents of that Summer day were brought to mind in later wanderings—mingling with fragments of real history, solid and touching—and with the attenuated substance of dreams and fancies; and the story grew out of these materials.

It has been asserted somewhat emphatically, "that no Novel could attain popularity in these degenerate days, unless there were woven into the texture of it some form of assault upon morals or theology. Either indelicacy or unbelief, either a plot constructed upon some violation of established canons of virtue and purity, or the announcement of broad denials of commonly received dogmas of Christian faith. The attack upon morals, if not made in dramatic style, may consist only of allusions or hints, more or less suggestive; that upon theology may be only a sneer at the effete theories of a past age, and may be chiefly objectionable because of the flippant use of names and subjects that are held in reverence by the wise and virtuous. But to succeed, the novel must contain one of these objectionable features."

Should THE ODD TRUMP win popular favor, it will disprove this assertion.

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Book I.

THE PICTURE CARDS.

CHAPTER I.

The Rescue.

AFTER a rain of two days the water-courses were swollen and turbid. The little rivulet tributary to the Severn, and known as Merton's Brook, was now a mighty stream, spreading over the lowland meadows and roaring through the narrow defiles of the high ground. The afternoon sun was shining brilliantly upon the wet leaves on the trees and upon the green hedgerows, and no striking token of the long storm was visible except the sullen yellow flood, already subsiding, and the gorgeous rainbow in the eastern sky.

Plodding along the highroad from Gloucester came a pedestrian. He was a youth of twenty-two, perhaps, clad in such attire as to escape attention — not remarkably fashionable, and not out of date. You would pass him almost without notice, unless he happened to be looking at you, and then you would probably nod civilly because you would detect his readiness to nod to you. Nothing at all remarkable about the fellow except the long lashes over his thoughtful eyes, and a certain prompt good-nature that you recognised somehow, even before he showed his white teeth in answering your salutation; and it might occur to you that there was a kind of contradiction between the thoughtfulness of his brown eyes and the ready cheerfulness of his greeting. If you were a philosopher you would rightly judge that the quick smile was inherited, and the thoughtful expression acquired, perhaps through sad experiences.

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Merton's Brook was bridged in two places. The highroad led across the stream, but between the youth and the bridge there was a foot or two of rushing water thirty or forty yards broad. A horseman might cross it safely enough, but it was over boot-tops. The footman paused at the brink of the flood and debated with himself. Should he wait two hours for the torrent to subside? No. He, poor fellow, had not yet learned to wait. Should he dash in and through to the bridge? No. That involved a gallon of muddy water in each boot. Should he take off his boots and wade across? No. He could not afford the damage to his habiliments. What then? Why, there was the railway-bridge half-a-mile down stream.

The railway crossed the brook at the low meadows, and the bridge was merely a continuation of the trestlework that extended a hundred yards westwardly from the margin of the stream. There was no law forbidding passage here, but there was a grum old bridge-tender, whose duty it was to keep pedestrians away from the trestlework; but the brook had banished the old curmudgeon from his post, and the way was clear.

Arrived at the end of the trestlework, our traveller paused again. Before him were four lines of cold iron a little above the surface of the swift water. He could not see the cross-ties; they were submerged. If he crossed here, he must keep his foothold upon any one of the four rails. A hundred and fifty yards of this precarious travelling would bring him to the high eastern bank of Merton's Brook, and a mile from his home.

The pensive expression faded out of his eyes while he surveyed the scene, and gave place to a look of quiet determination. The obstacles he had encountered had awakened a dormant dare-devil in his bosom.

"It is a mere matter of pluck," he muttered, as he drew off his boots; and fixing his eyes upon a telegraph-pole beyond the stream, while the waters eddied and gurgled beneath his feet, he boldly and rapidly strode out upon his narrow bridge, and walked safely until he reached the margin of the brook proper, where old Galt's sentry-box stood. Here there was a small platform; and availing himself of the opportunity, he stepped upon it and sat down upon the bench at the door of the box. Old Galt was not there; he knew what Merton's Brook was after a long rain, and he had escaped to his cottage before the flood had caught him.

The July sun was hot. The youth threw off his coat and neckcloth, inviting a catarrh; and while he sat there fanning himself with his hat, he heard the rattle of an approaching train and the shriek of the

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engine. It was coming from the west, and he had time enough to reach the bank before it. Catching up his boots and coat, he took the rail again, and stepping gingerly, neared the eastern bank. There he made a discovery. The huge timbers upon which the rails were laid were imbedded in solid masonry on the eastern end of the bridge, but the muddy torrent that came down from the hills had worn away a passage behind the abutment, around it, under it, and it had sunk away from the timbers, leaving them vibrating upon the angry tide. They were kept in place by the ties bolting them together, and by the rails connecting them with the track on solid ground; but as they trembled under the tread of the adventurous youth, it flashed upon his mind like lightning that the weight of the coming train would tear the bridge from these frail fastenings. Rushing up the steep bank by the side of the track, he turned, and waving his coat and hat frantically, signalled the approaching train, already upon the trestlework. It was coming up at moderate speed — too rapidly to be checked in time. Without a definite purpose in his mind, he dropped his boots and coat, took off his waistcoat and braces, and waited a few appalling seconds for the catastrophe.

His quick eye took it all in. First the spreading of the track just over the swirling brook, and the sullen plunge of the engine out of sight under the hissing flood; then the crash of the passenger-carriages as they ran together in a confused heap. Then the head and shoulders of the engine-driver, as he battled bravely with the water and finally crawled out upon the bank. Then he heard the wail of a hundred voices, and saw here and there men clambering out from the mass of ruins, some slipping off into the boiling flood, some aiding women with pale faces as they crept out into the sunlight from carriages lying over on their sides. Then he saw a long tress of dark hair, a white face, an arm tossed up from a bundle of female attire as it swept by him in the surging torrent; and as he caught this last sight, he clasped his hands above his head and plunged into the stream.

Oddly enough, when his head emerged again, he raised his eyes to the placid sky and murmured a word or two of praise and thanksgiving that he had been led to divest himself of so much of his clothing. He was a strong swimmer, and as he rapidly gained upon the woman, floating now, and now sinking out of sight, he noticed that she threw her arm up again before she sank.

"She will come up once more at least," he said, as he clove his way towards her, or rather towards the spot where he had seen her

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hand disappear. It was gained, passed, and then after two or three more strokes he ceased his efforts and waited. He knew he must be within reach of her, but after a moment's delay, she not reappearing, he dived and swam under water until he touched her cold face. With one strong arm around her waist, he rose to the surface again, and by steady labor gained the shallows a mile below the wrecked bridge, and drew her out upon the grassy bank.

She was not dead evidently, though her eyes were closed. There was a tremulous motion in her hands as he chafed them, and she moaned when he raised her head upon his breast. What should he do? She would die for lack of assistance while he sat stupidly gazing upon her pale face. Raising her tenderly from the ground, he placed her limp arms over his shoulder, and taking her up bodily, he strode sturdily away from Merton's Brook up the hillside and into the high-road. She was a well-grown young woman, and not at all fairy-like in weight. Giving himself a brief rest when he reached the stile leading into a shaded footpath, he crossed it with his unconscious burden, and paused no more until he entered his mother's cottage, and ascending the staircase to his own chamber, he laid the moist, bedraggled body upon the spotless coverlid of his bed.

"I am safe to catch it now," he thought, his mind and body both relieved of a weight. "When Mother sees this mess, what will she *not* say? Mother! Mother! where are you, Mother dear?"

"Here, my son," answered a gentle voice below; "where are you?"

"Up here, Mother, in my room. Please come quickly;" and meeting her at the staircase with a kiss, he continued, "Don't be alarmed, please ma'am, I have fished up a young woman out of Merton's Brook, and she won't come to. She is not drowned, for she moaned just now. But please come and see what is to be done, and cut open her stays or something, and make her open her eyes."

A lovely, gentle face, surrounded and surmounted with hair of pure silver; long lashes over kind eyes, placid and calm; a step of easy grace; a dignity that was more noticeable because it was free from hauteur, and a direct honesty of expression — some of these were the characteristics which this lady had transmitted to the panting boy who stood aglow and dripping by her side as she looked at the motionless form upon the bed, after snipping certain cords with her scissors.

"A doctor the first thing. Run over to Galt's," she said, "Doctor Maguire is there. Stay! where are your boots and coat?"

"A mile up the bank, Mother," he answered. "I will tell you when I return."

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"Come back, sir!" said his mother. "I will go for the doctor; help me raise her head a little. There. Now get the brandy from my room, and see if you can get a spoonful down her throat while I am gone." And glancing at the soiled counterpane, the muddy footprints on the matting, and her son's rather unclean appearance, she hurried away.

He got the brandy, and parting her white teeth with the spoon, he allowed the liquid to trickle slowly into her mouth. Presently, with a convulsive effort, she swallowed. She opened her violet eyes, and looking at his anxious face bending over her, she threw up her hand, as she had done in the water, and murmured:

"Save me! Oh, save me!" and then she closed her eyes again. It was a momentary look, imploring and eager, but it carried her with electric rapidity into the inmost recesses of his heart.

"Please don't faint again!" he said, kneeling by the bedside and chafing her hand vigorously: "Mother has gone for the doctor and will return in a moment. She don't hear me! What shall I do?" and he put back the tangled hair from her face. He thought he would like to have one soft tress, and with guilty haste and trepidation he took the scissors his mother had left and severed a glossy ringlet, which he kissed and then thrust into his bosom with a blush. In his confusion he did not see the little strip of violet below her eyelids. Taking her soft hand again he kissed it, while she lay quiet and apparently lifeless.

"She is not dead," he whispered; "I can feel a feeble pulse, and she is breathing evidently. Oh, if she would only show those blessed eyes again! I *did* save her, Heaven be praised! And if she will only live! Oh, how I could love her, if I dared!"

The brandy was gradually producing its effect, and a faint color spread over her face. While he watched rapturously the signs of returning life, his mother, followed by Dr. Maguire and two of Galt's stalwart daughters, entered the chamber.

The doctor felt the pulses, listened a moment to her respirations, and nodded his head.

"A warrum bath, ma'am!" he said. "She is not kilt entirely. A warrum bath and dry clothing, plaze, and me and the youngster will go down stairs."

"I turned on the hot water, Mother," said the youngster, "the bath is all ready. And while you are attending to the young lady, I will go to your room and make myself presentable. I need a full outfit, you see. Doctor, will you excuse me ten minutes?"

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"Surely! Let it be quite warm, ma'am. It will be all the betther if it is hot enough to make her squale a trifle. All we want is the reaction."

When the doctor was summoned to the patient the second time, she was propped up in the bed, pale and languid.

"Ah!" said the Doctor, "are you betther, Miss?"

"Yes, sir," she answered faintly, "only a little weak."

"Have ye iver a dhrop of brandy, ma'am? Yis, here is the stuff itself. Now, miss, I put four ounces in this tumbler. So! And now I fill it up with wather. Now swallow a tayspoonful ivery fifteen minits. Give her a cup of tay, ma'am, an hour hence, with as much dhry toast as she will ate. Thin give her what's left of the grog, and let her go to sleep. She will be well in the morning. Kape her *quite* to-night, plaze."

Rose Cottage was on the verge of Merton, a little village five miles from Gloucester. On the morning after the railway catastrophe, Sally Galt entered the chamber, bringing the young lady's garments, dried and renovated. The patient was awake.

"Here are your things, Miss," said Sally; "here is your purse. Three pounds six. We had to take the money out to clean the purse. A letter for the master; the postman has just left it. How do you feel this morning, Miss?"

"Quite well, I thank you. I will dress and come down immediately. I do not need any assistance, thank you."

She dressed with exemplary rapidity, looked with dismay at the soiled ribbons on her hat, but put it on, and just as she was about to leave the room her eyes caught the letter on the table. She read the address:

"Radcliffe Merton, Esq.,
Rose Cottage, Merton, Gloucester."

She staggered back with a low cry of anguish and covered her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out the sight.

"Oh!" she said, wringing her hands, "what shall I do? I dare not pause to ask. I know I must fly."

She seized a pen and wrote a line or two upon a sheet of note-paper, wrapped a sovereign and a shilling in another sheet and addressed it "For the doctor," then walked softly down-stairs. Through a window at the right of the porch she saw the silver hair of her hostess as she bent over a rose-bush which she was tying to a frame. Without pausing, the weeping girl passed out of the house into the lane, and then with rapid steps gained the Gloucester highway. The morning

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was enchantingly beautiful. The birds were warbling in the trees; the brook had returned to its ordinary channel, still discolored, but placid in the sunlight, and nature appeared peaceful and happy, mocking with her smiling face the pallid countenance of the young maiden fleeing like a fugitive toward the ancient city. The note she left contained only these incoherent words:—"I am grateful—oh, how grateful! and oh, how wretched! But I am compelled to fly from friends who have been so kind to me, with no better explanation than this. Pity and forgive me."

CHAPTER II.

Miss Merton.

The broad lands of Squire Merton lay upon both sides of Merton's Brook, including the village and a dozen fruitful farms. The estate had belonged to the Mertons two or three centuries, and they were one of the oldest families in the county. The present Squire was the elder of two brothers, taking the entire estate by the entail; while his younger brother, Captain Merton of the Royal Navy, had inherited his mother's fortune. He married Miss Radcliffe, and dying, left his widow with one son, Radcliffe Merton, who was just attaining his majority at the date of this story.

Matthew Merton, or "Squire Mat," as he was more commonly called, was a hale old gentleman of sixty. He was a widower with two daughters, and "Nevy Radcliffe" was heir-at-law to all his broad acres. "Rose Cottage," which stood on the border of the estate, had been set aside for the future Squire, who spent the greater part of his time upon the continent, Mrs. Merton having a triangular weakness for Naples, Geneva, and Paris. But Rose Cottage was still understood to be Mr. Radcliffe Merton's house, and here he and his mother abode whenever they were in England.

Squire Mat was extremely busy the day of the railway catastrophe. The wreck was worse in appearance than reality. Nobody was killed, though the engine-driver escaped almost miraculously. He saw the impending plunge of his engine a moment before it occurred, and he took a "header" into the muddy stream and got safely ashore. Three of the carriages had been thrown over on the opposite track, bruising

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the passengers, but breaking no bones. One carriage had fallen bodily into the water at the edge of the brook, but the depth was less than a yard, and the inmates, all second and third-class passengers, had crawled out, not seriously hurt. There was a report current that a young girl had been swept away down the stream, but this was traced to a half-demented youth, who could not give a coherent account of the matter. He had travelled with her, he said, an hour; she was beautiful as an angel; he had seen a man plunge in the water after her from the bank, and that was all. A pair of boots, a coat, waistcoat and hat were found upon the bank, and the railway officials took possession of them.

The good Squire rode down the bank of Merton's Brook, looking for traces, but found none. When he returned late in the afternoon, there was more authentic intelligence. A young gentleman had reclaimed the garments, describing them and the contents of the pockets. He had also confirmed the report of the young lady's accident, and brought the pleasing news of her rescue. She was doing well, in a cottage down the stream somewhere. None of the railway hands knew the gentleman. The engine-driver had also seen him dash into the stream, but was too much demoralised by the "smash" to describe him. He had a vague idea that some one was floating away, and that the youth attempted a rescue. "He swimmed like a duck," he said.

"This is a poor scent!" said the fox-hunting Squire, as he rode slowly homeward. "Maybe the girls can puzzle it out. If Lucy don't get thrown off by a resemblance, she is safe to find some explanation. All those fellows said it was a gentleman, a handsome one and young. We will scour the country to-morrow on both sides of the brook. He must be a regular trump, though. Yoicks! I have found it myself! It was Trumpley Wailes, as sure as a gun! and just like him too."

Arrived at Merton Park, the first duty was to dress for dinner. The curate, Mr. Thorne, was there. He was regular in his habits, and whist at the Park was a regular appointment on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Punctuality was the cardinal virtue at the Park, and at seven o'clock precisely dinner was announced.

"Take Lucy down, Thorne," said the Squire. "Come, Baby," and he gave his arm to his younger daughter.

The curate had brought news. On his way from the village he had encountered Dr. Maguire, and had a very full account of the young lady's mishap. She had been rescued and carried to Rose Cottage by Mr. Trumpley Wailes, and was there now. The doctor said she was a charming gurrill, and promised complete restoration to health

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the next day. Mrs. Wailes had called him from Mrs. Galt's bedside, and he had prescribed for the young lady and put her in bed. She was very slightly drowned.

"Maguire says young Wailes had carried the lady from the brook to the cottage," said Mr. Thorne after the soup; "he must be tolerably athletic."

"The fellow is a regular Samson," said the Squire; "I remember seeing him put that drunken rascal, Podd, through a gap in the hedge. Podd was at Rose Cottage, where Radcliffe had sent him to fix up the flowers. He was full of beer, and was disrespectful to Mrs. Wailes. Trumpley bundled him through the hedge on the instant, and Podd was thoroughly astonished."

"Podd is a bad lot," observed the curate; "I should not like to offend him."

"No," said Mr. Merton; "he would make mince-meat of *you* in short order. But he did not seem to have any stomach for another tussle with Wailes, but walked sulkily away."

"How came Wailes to occupy Mr. Radcliffe's cottage, Squire?" asked the curate, not heeding the compliment to his prowess.

"Rad sent him down here from London a year ago with a letter to me. He said he was under special obligations to this young gentleman, and begged me to put him in possession of the cottage. Wailes has always insisted upon paying me the rent every quarter. Podd was tinkering some flower-frames when Mrs. Wailes moved in, and said something to the old lady that was rather rude. I overheard him, and was about to blow him up when the youngster collared him. He went through the hedge before he finished his speech. Trumpley apologised to me very politely for momentary inattention to some remark I was making, as if he had just taken a pinch of snuff. What do you say, Lucy?"

Miss Merton sat at the head of the table by right. The hap-hazard manner in which the story has proceeded thus far, is but a lame excuse for the delay in presenting her formally to the reader. An English gentlewoman of thirty, at least No one asked her for the odd numbers. Not specially beautiful in person, albeit not uncomely. Her dark hair arranged in plain braids. Placid gray eyes, full of goodness and charity, yet erratic withal, at least one of them. The right orb of vision had a habit of rolling in fine frenzy into the inner corner whenever she was particularly interested in a subject. It was the only obliquity about her, for she was true as steel; and it did not disfigure her pleasant countenance, although it gave a comical tinge

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to serious sentiments sometimes. She had been mistress of Merton Park for nearly twenty years, taking the keys, the symbols of authority, at her mother's death, when Baby Sybil was born. Miss Merton had two devoted lovers. Dr. Maguire proposed with furious earnestness about three times a year, and was always rejected with gentle firmness. Mr. Thorne did not propose, because Maguire always went to him for consolation after each rebuff, and the curate felt that it would be a sort of breach of confidence to storm the citadel after one of these Celtic assaults; and by the time he made up his mind to declare his attachment, Dr. Maguire would happen to blunder into a new proposal, get his dismissal, and go to Mr. Thorne with the story of his latest discomfiture.

"I was about to say, Papa," said Miss Merton, "that Mr. Wailes always reminds me of old Mr. Grippe."

"Well," responded the Squire, "that is an entirely new discovery, Lucy, at all events. Perhaps you can designate the points of resemblance."

Miss Lucy's eye went into the corner.

"I am afraid I cannot, Papa," she answered, thoughtfully. "There must be certain points of resemblance, of course, but I cannot tell just what they are."

"I can assist you perhaps," replied the Squire. "Let me give you another slice of beef; so. Well, old Grippe wears a red wig; Wailes has glossy brown hair. Old Grippe weighs about eight stone light; Wailes is not far from ten. Grippe is four feet ten; Wailes is a foot taller. Grippe is afraid of his shadow; Wailes is not afraid of the devil. Grippe talks to you an hour without letting you know what he thinks; Wailes reveals his whole soul to you in two minutes. Grippe looks at you like a rat, with sharp eyes, peeping out of his hole; Wailes looks at you like a lion, with frank eyes in which is no touch of deceit."

"I don't think you have enumerated any of the real likenesses, Papa," objected Miss Merton; "there is something in their voices or accent—"

"Exactly. Grippe has a chronic asthma, and when he doesn't whine he wheezes; Wailes has a soft, gentle voice that doesn't lose its musical intonations even when he is in a passion."

Miss Merton's eye came out of the corner. It was of no use to argue with so obstinate a man as the Squire; so she led him off on a new scent adroitly, as only a woman can.

"Mr. Wailes looks too amiable ever to get in a passion. Did you ever see him in a regular rage?"

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"Oh yes; that time he bundled old Podd through the hedge. I should like to see Grippe touch Podd."

"Never mind Grippe, sir, please."

"Well, I saw Wailes in white heat on another occasion. Thorne, the port is with you. Thanks!"

"We are waiting very patiently, sir," said Miss Merton, "for your story."

"It is not much of a story," rejoined her father, "and I can hardly make you understand it. The whole thing occurred in a minute. It was at Euston Station in London. Wailes — I did not know him then — was waiting for a train. So was I. As we passed each other marching up and down the platform, I was attracted by the fellow's amiable face. Suddenly a young kid came racing down the platform, howling dismally. He was a mere mite of a boy, not over eight years old, I fancy. Wailes caught his arm as he passed, and I thought at first he was going to thrash the boy. But not he. He stopped his howling, and asked him why he howled.

"'Cos a bobby beat me,' said the boy.

"'What were you doing?' said Wailes. 'Tell me the truth.'

"'I wasn't doing nothink. I axed a swell to let me hold his pockmantle.'

"'Well?'

"'Vell, then, the bobby cotch me by the collar and licked me.'

"'Can you show me the bobby?' said Wailes, sweetly.

"'No; there vas three on 'em. There they are at the end of the flatform. I dunno vich von it was.'

"Wailes walked quietly down to the three policemen, and I followed to — to — to see what would come of it.

"'There was a small boy here just now,' said Wailes, with great politeness, addressing the three, 'and he tells me that one of you maltreated him. Who was it?'

"The three looked at him silently.

"'I shall make no complaints,' continued Wailes; 'on the contrary, I will give you an opportunity to complain of me.'

"Still there was no reply. Something in the young fellow's manner cowed the three.

"'Because,' said Wailes, softly, 'I will trash the infamous hound that beat that infant, within an inch of his life, if he will have the manhood to reveal himself.'

"He waited a minute or two for a reply, but none came, and then walked away with a gentle sigh.

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"'It seems to me, young gentleman,' I observed, when we were out of earshot, 'that you were looking for a fight just now.'

"'Yes, sir,' he answered, blushing like a girl. 'I had a little brother once, and I lose control of myself when I see a boy treated with cruelty.'

"'Suppose the right bobby had acknowledged the assault just now?' I asked.

"'I suppose you would have been following me by this time, sir,' he answered, laughing, 'to see me out of the scrape. I should have thrashed him, and the others would have arrested me. If Rad Merton had been here, we two could have polished off the three.'

"'Rad Merton is my nephew,' said I; "and that is the way I became acquainted with Mr. Trumpley Wailes."

"That is a good story, Squire," said Mr. Thorne, slyly. "I have no doubt that the uncle would have taken the nephew's place if a scrimmage had occurred."

"Fie, Thorne!" answered the Squire, "you forget that I am a Justice of the Peace. Are you going, girls? Thorne, will you finish the bottle?"

"No, sir; I follow the ladies."

"Then I follow you. And now for a quiet rubber."

As they took their places at the card-table, Miss Lucy's eye went into the corner on an exploring expedition.

"I was thinking, Papa," she observed, as she cut the cards, "I was thinking that you resemble Ludovic Leslie."

The Squire looked at her in mute admiration.

"Ludovic Leslie, you know," she continued, "*Le Balafré*. You know when his nephew was called away, he was fighting the Wild Boar of Ardennes, but he had to leave the combat unfinished; and the Wild Boar thought he would take that opportunity to escape, but Ludovic stopped him, and finished the fight on his nephew's account, and cut off the Boar's head. Now if you had polished the policemen on account of Radcliffe's absence, you see how similar the cases would be. I declare men seem to think of nothing in the world but fighting; it is their meat and drink. Deal, Papa, please."

The Squire silently dealt fifty-two cards, while Miss Merton's gentle eye came back to its normal position. He pondered her words, and tried to remember where he had met Ludovic Leslie, and what he was like, and then as he turned the trump-card he confirmed her last statement:

"Clubs!"

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CHAPTER III.

LUNATICS.

Be jabers!" said Dr. Maguire, as his old gig rattled away from Rose Cottage, "there is something in the atmosphere of Merton that favors lunacy! Here is that gurrill, drowned and kilt yesterday, and not fit to be out of bed, no doubt — and she is aff like a shot out of a hot shovel, the divil knows where! Laving me a guinea too! And she got no taste of medicine either, barrin' the dhrop of brandy. She had to fly, she says — and she is a born lady, I'll been sworn. I wonder if anybody was pershooing her?

"Thin there's ould Galt, as crazy as a loon. Niver a guinea out of that shanty, and yet I have to attend his cranky ould wife, who has as many whims as a duchess. Be jabers! she will have some rayson for crankiness when she takes them pills I left her this morning. It is an interesting case, and has given me many valuable chances to experiment. I ought to have a student to profit by my researches. That young Wailes would do.

"But he is a regular lunatic also. No man in his sinses would have got ready to swim yesterday, while the train was coming. And now he is aff, like another shot out of another hot shovel! Whin I asked him where he was going he just smiled, and said 'up the road, Doctor,' but he bolted out as soon as he read the gurrill's note. He's after her, be jabers!

"And here comes the Squire's carriage. And I thought it would rain and 'have got on this ould coat! Miss Lucy will be in the vehicle, av coorse. She's a monstrous fine woman, and I shall land in lunacy meself if I don't prevail on her to become Mrs. Maguire. Whoa! Jalap. The top of the morning to you, Miss Lucy! And to you, Miss Sybil. Squire, I am surprised to find you going on wheels."

"We are going to make a call, Doctor — that is, we are going to take the young lady to the Park. You must come over and cure her there. How is she this morning?"

"Is it the gurrill that was drowned?"

"Yes — or at least the girl that Wailes pulled out of the water. Is she better?"

"She's aff," responded the doctor — "fled — laving a guinea for me and a short note for Mrs. Wailes."

"Fled?" said the Squire and his daughters in a breath.

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"Bedad, it's her own word!" replied Maguire; "it's a nate little note, and just says she is obliged to fly."

"Let us go on to the Cottage, Papa," said Miss Merton, "and see Mrs. Wailes. Good morning, Doctor."

"Come over to dinner this evening, Doctor," said Squire Mat, as they parted. "Rad is coming — expect him this afternoon. Lucky it was not yesterday. Thorne is coming, and I will invite Wailes and his mother. We can make a double rubber."

"More lunacy," said the doctor; "get up, Jalap. Merton has made up his mind to marry little Sybil to that ugly divil Radcliffe, and in order to make the course of true love run rough, he encourages this good-looking young Wailes to dangle about his daughter. I suppose his income is about five pounds ten per annum; and he is about as indepindent as ould Grippe, who has lashins of money. Then he has the curate there twice a week, and I shouldn't wonder if *he* would be swate upon Miss Sybil too. His stipend is not very extensive, I fancy.

"Spakin' of ould Grippe reminds me that I have to go there to-day. That guinea is sure enough. Same ould trouble, av coorse — want of nourishin' food and dhrink. I could prescribe for him without seein' him. Half a pound of beefsteak for breakfast; one of Merton's dinners about twice a week. But I must humor the ould baste and give him some medicine. Sodæ Bi-carb. grains five — every four hours. And that's two-and-six more. It goes agin the grain to charge him such prices, but he would have no confidence in the treatment if he didn't pay. Another well-defined case of lunacy.

"When I persuade Miss Lucy to become Mrs. Maguire, I'll try a little experiment on her — I'll operate for strabismus. If I can kape that eye of hers from running into the corner, it will play the divil with her discovery of resemblances. Her last exploit was to find a striking likeness between me and Podd. Lunacy again. G'long! Jalap," and he gave his horse a vicious cut. "Spaking of the divil, here he is. Hillo, Podd!"

A tall, raw-boned man of about forty, with red hair and whiskers, little red eyes, keen and restless, rather repulsive in appearance, probably because of an air of insolent presumption that was habitual with him. You would judge him to be a free-thinker, a radical, a republican, a disorganiser. He carried a bundle of plants, the roots wrapped in moss. This was Podd. He did not answer the doctor, except with a surly nod.

"Where are you going, Podd?" said the doctor, pulling up.

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"Grippe's."

"Hum! — three miles. Where are you from?"

"Glo'ster."

"That's three more. Come, get in the gig; I'm going to Grippe's."

"Rather walk," answered Podd.

"Why, you blockhead, you'll save an hour!"

"Lose it," said Podd; "he pays while I walk."

"That's sensible anyhow," quoth the doctor. "He pays by the day, does he?"

"I charges him by the day," responded Podd; "he gen'lly knocks off summut, but I puts on enough to let him knock off."

"That's sensible also, though the morality is dubious. Do you treat all your customers in the same way?"

"No; I gen'lly lets 'ristocrats make their own terms — they're too proud to higgle over a shillin'. If I am dealin' with women I gen'lly makes a 'zact bargain, and if I can I makes 'em pay in advance. Grippe is neither 'ristocrat nor woman, though he'd like to pass for a 'ristocrat if he could. He orders the plants as if he was a lord, and pays for 'em as if he was a cadger." This was a long speech for Mr. Podd, and he paused exhausted.

"Bedad!" said the doctor, "you're a philosopher, Podd. Whom do you call 'ristocrats?"

"There's precious few on 'em about here," answered Podd. "I s'pose you might put the Squire in."

"No others?"

"Well — I mean by 'ristocrats those people who think the world was made for them. Sich a chap as young Wailes —"

"Wailes? Why, Podd, you're demented. Mr. Wailes is one of the most modest, unassuming of young men. And he is no richer than you are."

"Riches don't make any difference," said Podd, with an air of disgust; "that's the foolery of 'ristocracy. I don't know where Wailes gets it, but he is a reg'lar 'ristocrat. He passed me on the road a mile back, and he didn't notice me no more than dirt. If I was to do a job for him worth a shillin', he'd throw 'arf a crown at me, pretty much as you'd throw a bone at a dog. Hang him! I cannot abide him," and Mr. Podd sat down on the roadside, plucked a twig from his bundle of plants, which he chewed viciously. The doctor drove on, leaving the floriculturist to his reflections.

"Clear lunacy," said Dr. Maguire. "It's odd how many ways men's minds can go astray. Of all the young fellows I know, Wailes

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is least like the overbearing 'ristocrat, as Podd calls him. In fact he is easy and natural in his manners, always cheerful and polite, and would not harm a fly. What can have put this ould rashkil agin him?"

Jalap had a trick of working the head-stall over his ear. If he was tied up to a post, he could extricate one ear in one rub; but by some muscular action he managed to get it out of durance, even while trotting along the road. His master always replaced the bridle when Jalap disarranged it, as the ear bent down gave a quizzical appearance to the "turnout," and the doctor was careful of appearances.

"You ould omadhann!" said he, as he adjusted the head-stall, "I wonder where you learned that trick. I'll put a strip of vesicating epispastic on your ear, me boy. You are as bad a lunatic as the rest of them."

He had stopped on the crest of a hill, which was in fact the highest point of land within a circle of ten miles. Looking back over the road he had travelled, he could see the chimneys of Merton and the church-spire; a little to the left the trees of Merton Park, with an occasional gleam of the mansion among them. Podd was afoot again half a mile off. Looking northward, the doctor saw the smoke of Gloucester, though the town was hidden by intervening trees. As he was stepping into his gig again, he was startled by the sudden appearance of another personage close by him.

On one side of the road there had been an excavation made years ago. It was probably the beginning of a work of repairs, as the old road had originally deflected at the brow of the hill. This little hollow was overgrown with bushes, thick enough to conceal the young lady who emerged from their shadow.

"It is the Doctor," she said, half in inquiry.

"It is," responded Maguire, "and bedad! you are my patient. My dear young lady, you have demoralised an entire community by your abrupt departure—" He paused as she clasped her hands with an air of great distress.

"Oh Doctor," she said, "please say no more. I was obliged to do what I have done. I know how rude and ungrateful you must think me, but I could not do otherwise."

All the quaintness disappeared, and the doctor presented the characteristics of the polished gentleman he was, being confronted by beauty in distress.

"Will you allow me to serve you?" said he. "You have left a fee for me this morning that I have hardly earned."

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"I wish to reach Gloucester, Doctor," she answered. "I was tired and sat down there to rest. And, and—now that I am rested I am afraid to go on."

"Pray, tell me what you fear. Or, if you do not wish to tell me, get into my gig, and I will take you to Gloucester; I am going there." This was a constructive fib, as the doctor had no intention of visiting Gloucester a moment before. "It is quite lucky that I met you, as the encounter will save me from two or three miles of a dull drive, and save you from a tiresome walk."

"Is there any other road?—I mean, some road less direct than this? Oh Doctor, you look so kind I will tell you all. While I was resting, I saw—the gentleman who saved my life yesterday—alas! alas!—he was coming up the hill and I crept into the bushes there until he passed. He did not see me, but I saw him—his face as resolute as fate. And I think—I—fear—he is looking for me!"

"Divil a doubt of it!" said the doctor involuntarily.

"Well, sir—it is life and death—oh, I cannot tell you! But I *must* escape him. And now, if you can take me to Gloucester—by some other road—how I will thank you!"

"Get in the gig, my child," said the doctor. "I was lying just now, when I said I was going to Gloucester. I am going to visit a patient who lives a mile from the town. But it is entirely out of the way of ordinary travel, and I will take you into Gloucester from the other side. Come, think of me as your father and do not fear."

She took the seat by his side, and Jalap, put upon his mettle, spun along the road at a good pace. She was silent, and the doctor was too considerate to talk much, until they reached the lodge-gates of Halidon, the seat of the eminent banker, Mr. Anthony Grippe.

"This is Halidon," said the Doctor.

"Who lives here?"

"Mr. Anthony Grippe."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! Doctor, please tell me how I can reach Gloucester. I will walk. I'd rather walk, please. And, Doctor, please don't say to *any one* that you saw me to-day. Please promise!"

"Certainly, my child, I promise." She was getting out of the gig as he spoke. "If you are determined to walk, keep straight on this road; it will take you into the eastern side of the town, a mile off."

She had taken a step or two, paused, turned, ran back, and took the doctor's hand and kissed it; and then she skimmed along the road at a rate that soon hid her from the doctor's sight.

"This case is the best defined of all," said the doctor; "con-

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firmed lunacy! It must have come to her through three or four generations of March hares. She runs like a startled fawn from young Wailes — ah! what has that sly rashkill been up to?— and she runs as vigorously from ould Grippe. How lovely she is! If angels iver went crazy, I should think this was one — broke out of some celestial mad-house, and allowed to flit about the earth to set ivery man mad that saw her. I did not even ask her name. Bad cess to me! I was too much of a blockhead to ask her anything. She sat up here just like a duchess, and somehow she kept me quite by her manner. And thin she had a tear or two in her eyes ivery minnit!

"If I only knew who caused those tears," he continued, savagely, "I'd crack his skull with all the pleasure in life; and if the crack happened to be fatal, I'd dissect him after!"

Gloating over this diabolical picture, he passed through the gates of Halidon.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Anthony Grippe.

Halidon is one of those diminutive counterfeits of Paradise which abound in merry England. It had belonged to a family of gentlemen through twenty generations, and the Trumpleys of Halidon, although without title, had occupied a high place in the county records for six hundred years. They had been prosperous generally, up to the majority of the last of the race. Harold Trumpley had taken possession of the estate thirty years before the date of this story, and after a few years of dissipation, had left England utterly bankrupt. He was very little known in Gloucestershire, as he resided on the Continent, generally at Baden when the gambling season came round, and at other times at Paris, Brussels, Stockholm, or St. Petersburg. He avoided English society, was rude and uncouth in his manners, and always quarrelsome in his cups. At last the news of his death came. He had won largely in a gambling encounter with the bank at Baden, and gathering up his gains had started for Paris, and was murdered on the road. His remains were brought to England and interred in Merton churchyard. His only surviving relative was a sister, whose entire fortune was an annuity of five hundred pounds, and a year after his death she left Halidon to marry Mr. Henry

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Wailes. The reader has already seen her. The estate was sold under legal process, yielding barely enough to pay the various mortgages and the numerous debts of the profligate owner. Mr. Anthony Grippe was the purchaser.

The description of this gentleman given by Squire Mat was sufficiently accurate so far as it went; and the contrast between the withered old banker and the stalwart youth was certainly marked enough for identity. Mr. Grippe, in addition to his other ailments, had a stiff leg, and hobbled over the ground in ungainly fashion. Other points of dissimilarity may appear as the story progresses.

As the new owner of Halidon he was received by the county gentry with considerable reserve. At the date of the purchase he was a junior partner in the banking firm of Browler Brothers, Gloucester, and had been entirely unknown until he became a landowner, and as possessor of Halidon, which was a show place, one of the magnates of the neighborhood. Such attentions as he received from the rector of the parish, Squire Merton, and a few others, were civilly acknowledged, but he pleaded feeble health and the exacting cares of his business as excuses for declining all social entertainments. As years rolled on he gradually rose from his subordinate position in the bank, and finally, only a year or two before the date of this story, he had bought the interest of his partners, and was now the sole proprietor of "Browler Brothers," which his application and genius had raised into an "eminent" firm, with unlimited credit. Mr. Grippe spent as much time as possible at his bank, and appeared to have no enjoyment of life except in the prosecution of his business.

He had startled the curious among his clerks and acquaintances a few days before the doctor's visit by bringing an invalid daughter from Paris, and taking her directly from the railway-station to Halidon. Nobody had ever heard of his marriage, and he had passed for an old bachelor for twenty-odd years. There were few among his friends that ventured to ask him any personal questions, and those that did, got no answer. He had a convenient deafness, which, with violent attacks of asthma, seized him whenever he pleased. The paroxysms always outlasted the patience of any anxious inquirer into his personal affairs, unless the questioner happened to be one whom Mr. Grippe did not care to treat politely, in which case the answer came promptly enough, but it was the reverse of satisfactory.

The doctor was ushered into the library, where he found Mr. Grippe, his right leg propped up on a cushioned stool, to which he pointed as an apology for not rising. The banker was quite bald,

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but wore a magnificent gray beard, something unusual among gentlemen of his age and occupation, but which he asserted mitigated his fits of asthma. He was rather below the medium size, and had that thoroughly seasoned appearance which you have noticed in a smoked herring. When his ugly red wig was off he was not positively ill-looking, as there was a twinkle of humor in his small eyes occasionally, and his flowing beard gave an air of dignity to his *tout ensemble.* Just now he was looking his best, as his wig was hanging on the back of his chair, and he was frugally regaling upon biscuits and cheese, which he moistened with occasional draughts from a mug of bitter beer.

"Good-morning, Doctor," he said, "take that chair. Jem, draw the cork from the other bottle. Bitter beer, Doctor. You will have to praise it, for you ordered it for me. The Stilton is good though."

"Upon my word," replied the doctor, seating himself as directed, "this is a double pleasure! Stilton and Bass! Bedad, that's double too! But I mane the pleasure of partaking of the faste, and of finding yourself well enough to partake also."

"Well enough!" said Mr. Grippe, "of course I'm well enough: never was better in my life."

"Well, thin," responded the doctor, with his mouth full of biscuit, "I'm bate entirely. I thought you sent for me professionally."

"So I did."

"But I cannot see how my professional skill can be of any use, if you are in your usual health."

"Ah!" said Mr. Grippe, "my usual health is nothing to boast of. I have had a fine attack of asthma this week. Very probably I shall have another to-day; I feel the symptoms now."

"And you wished me to be at hand to treat the symptoms as they appeared?" said Dr. Maguire.

"Not a bit of it!" answered the banker. "I have another doctor to whom I always apply for relief from asthma."

"And who may he be?"

"Dr. Experience I have been fighting asthma forty years, and I know all about it. It would be inhuman to choke a man on the verge of suffocation with your confounded drugs. No, Sir! I sent for you to see another patient. Do you know French, Doctor?"

"Wee, Munseer," replied the doctor; "that is, I know that much of the lingo, and that's all. Bedad, thin, it isn't a Frenchman you want me to physic?"

"No," said Mr. Grippe, meditating. "Ah! here comes asthma!

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Excuse me, Doctor," and he took a cigar-case from his pocket, extracted a small cigarette, which he lighted and puffed vigorously.

"Piff!" said Maguire. "What stooff is that?"

"Stramonium."

"Deadly, be jabers! I knew a celebrated professor oncet, who said the man who treated himself had a fool for a patient; and he intinded the observation for professional men, too. Piff! You might alternate that pison with a whiff or two of sulphuretted hydrogen by way of relafe. Piff! Of all the quackeries I have iver encountered this is the worst!"

"Quackery!" replied Mr. Grippe, disdainfully. "Pray, what is asthma, Doctor?"

"A disease of the pneumo-gastric nerves," answered the doctor promptly.

"What is the specific effect of stramonium?"

"To kill."

"Pooh! I have been smoking it forty years."

"Well, you have the constitution of a horse. Forty minits of that stooff would put me in the grave."

"I suppose I must have considerable powers of resistance," said the banker, slyly, "as I have been swallowing your mixtures for a dozen years. Never mind the stramonium, Doctor; you can make up for it when you drug me next time."

"I've been trating you with mild remedies hitherto," said the doctor; "let me get another chance at you, that's all! Where is the patient? my time is limited."

"Let your other patients wait a little," said Mr. Grippe; "it will be all the better for them, no doubt. I don't see how we can get along though. Does that homœopathic fellow know French?"

"If he does," quoth Dr. Maguire with dignity, "it is the only thing he knows. What the divil — excuse me! — do you want with that barbarous lingo? You said the patient was not a Frenchman."

"No; but she happens to be a French woman."

"Murder! and where did you get a French woman?"

Mr. Grippe had another sudden paroxysm of asthma. He coughed and spluttered—strangled—kicked his stool over, and lighted another cigarette.

"The indications are quite plain," said the doctor impressively. "Constriction of the eighth pair; nausea, and consequent relaxation. One grain of tartarised antimony in six subdivisions; a dose ivery fifteen minits. Relief within an hour."

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"And death within a year," said Mr. Grippe, choking and gasping. "Antimony! Metallic poison! Get out with your drugs, and set up my stool again, please. Thanks!"

"If you would lave off that confounded ould wig," said the doctor, "I believe your health would be better."

"Do you? Well, I am going to leave it off. She don't like it."

"Ah," said Maguire, "we have got back to the patient again. Have you been making an importation? What is she? A cook?"

"No; I must explain, I see. Doctor, suppose a man had got married in France twenty years ago. Suppose his wife had died, leaving an infant daughter. Suppose he left the child in safe hands there until now, and then concluded to bring her home? And suppose she, being the worse for the Channel passage, should need treatment, and the blockhead of a doctor could not understand her description of symptoms —"

"Hould on!" said the doctor; "a ray of light dawns upon me."

"That is something to be thankful for," said Mr. Grippe.

"Hould on! If you married a French woman, you must have coorted her. If you coorted her, you must have known her lingo. Be jabers! how much French do *you* know?"

The asthma gave Mr. Grippe another turn. He meditated amid his gasps.

"She knew a little English," he answered.

"Oh! Ah! Well, no doubt the child knows a word or two. Come on; I shall have no trouble to mention. Come on!"

Mr. Grippe threw away the remnant of his cigarette and led the way through the long hall. Ascending the staircase, he knocked at the door of the chamber over the drawing-room. It had been the domain of the ladies of Halidon for many generations.

"Entrez!" said a soft voice from within; and followed by Dr. Maguire, the banker passed through the door and into the presence of a new character, whose importance in the story demands a new chapter.

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CHAPTER V.

HELOÏSE.

The spacious chamber into which the gentlemen entered was one of a *suite* running along the south side of the house. The windows looked out upon a well-kept lawn, adorned with diminutive flower-beds, floriculture being the banker's most amiable weakness. Over the belt of shrubbery at the foot of the lawn the spire of Merton church was visible, and here and there glimpses of Merton's Brook are seen through openings in the trees. The view on that bright summer noon was enchanting.

The young lady who was seated at the window arose at their entrance, looking with some curiosity at the doctor, whose countenance presented a queer compound of confidence and trepidation. He had a general idea that he could make himself understood by speaking very broken English, but had forgotten to provide for the relative necessity of understanding what the lady might say to him. He was still perplexed with this problem, and looking with some dismay at the black eyes of his prospective patient, when Mr. Grippe opened the ball.

"Mossu le Docture, Mam'selle."

"Bonjour, Monsieur," replied the lady; "asseyez-vous, Messieurs."

As she spoke with her hands and eyes as well as her voice, they understood her and took the seats indicated, and she resumed her own. There was an awkward pause, the lady alone retaining perfect composure. Mr. Grippe began to have symptoms of asthma again, and Dr. Maguire secretly wished he had some similar ailment to fall back upon.

"Monsieur parle-t-il français?" said Mademoiselle, smiling at the doctor.

"Well, no," responded Maguire, "that is—on poo—but not enough for a prolonged conversation. But we shall get along. How do you feel to-day? That is: commy vous portay vous?"

"Je suis bien fatiguée, Monsieur, c'est tout."

"Ah!" said the doctor, "that's well. Though what the blazes 'say too' may mane, bates me entirely." This last sentence was intended to be an "aside." The doctor proceeded: "Mam'selle, parlez l'anglay on poo?"

"Not a leetle word," replied the lady.

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"That's a misfortune. I say, Mr. Grippe, why in the world have you allowed your daughter to reach this age without taching her some few sentences of the vernacular? Permitty moy, Mam'selle," and he took her wrist in his fingers. "So! good pulse anyhow. Be jabers, I remember some more of the lingo that just suits. Vouly vous avay some bear anglay, Mam'selle?"

"Plait-il?"

"No; bear anglay. Mr. Grippe, plaze ring for a bottle of that bitter beer. She will understand the bottle, I'll be bound."

The banker rang the bell and gave the necessary orders. When the bottle appeared, the doctor went through various contortions in dumb show, to make Heloïse acquainted with it. She looked at the bottle and nodded her head. Then, drawing the cork, he poured the beer into a glass and presented it with a polite bow. She took the tumbler and swallowed the contents without a struggle.

"Now thin," said Dr. Maguire, "we may venture to lave the case. My prescription is easily understood, Mr. Grippe. The young lady must have a bottle of beer twice a day, until she is well. As for diet, a beefsteak for breakfast—dejuney, Mam'selle—and whatever she will ate for dinner. Ye'll have to get some other interpreter, however. I can't come over here every day, merely to translate for you."

"I shall have an interpreter this afternoon," said Mr. Grippe. "I hope Miss Heloïse will learn English very rapidly, as I long to converse with her myself."

"Oh, well," said the doctor, complacently, "you can pick up enough of the lingo to get along, if you only have courage to try. Mam'selle, you understood me pretty well?"

"Je ne sais pas," replied Mam'selle.

"It's of very little use to say it to your Pa," said the doctor; "but he will improve with practice. Kape him at it, Mam'selle. Adoo, Mam'selle. Au revore!"

When the gentlemen departed, Mademoiselle took an English lesson in this wise: She drew a letter from her pocket, and reseating herself at the window, began a laborious study of its contents. It was in English. She could not read it, but the reader can:

"PARIS, *July* 10.

"*Most Beautiful:*

"I offer no apology for thus addressing you. I cannot do otherwise. I love you; and this fact will excuse any action that may seem improper. I do not know what obstacles may be in my way, but I

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will surmount them all, unless you forbid the effort. I do not know what risks I encounter in communicating with you in this way, but I have no other dread than that of incurring your displeasure. Six times have I seen you, and the last time, I saw you disappear within the convent gates. If I could so win your favor, and win you, I would tear down its walls with naked hands. But I dare do nothing until I gain a word—a look of encouragement from you. To-morrow I shall see you again, at the Madeleine, and shall find or make an opportunity to place this note in your hands. And then I will have to wait a week—seven long ages—until the next Sunday, when I may read my fate in your eyes. I offer you the home of an English gentleman, who has no desire in life equal to that of calling you his wife. If my mad passion has not blinded me, I could almost hope, I hardly know why. But if it be possible for you to regard me with favor, one line from you addressed to 'R., Hotel Meurice,' would fill me with inexpressible joy."

The penmanship was defective, and this, perhaps, increased the difficulties of the translation. But Heloïse pored over the mysterious characters with manifest impatience, consulting a French and English dictionary, and making little progress.

"Hélas!" she said at last, in her own tongue. "It is impossible! I can make out only one charming word—'Je vous aime!' Ah! when shall I know the rest?"

She walked the length of the large room up and down with the superb grace of a tigress in her native jungle. There was no trace of fatigue or of any more serious ailment, and she was evidently in robust health. Probably Mr. Grippe, who had suffered untold agonies between Calais and Dover, thought the trifling sea-sickness, and the subsequent headache of which she complained, were more serious maladies than they really were. Her pale face, looking paler by contrast with her black eyes and hair, and also by contrast with the ruddy complexion of English girls, had awakened his anxiety, and her manner was *distrait* and cold. The little French that the banker knew was larger in volume than her knowledge of English, and the few days she had spent at Halidon had been specially dreary to her, and appeared to confirm her in the French idea that the sun never shone upon that desolate island. It was dull and cloudy when she landed, and there had been forty-eight hours of solid down-pour since her arrival. Altogether, she had spent nearly a week in compulsory silence, and this was so totally abnormal to a young woman of twenty or thereabouts, that the true marvel was that she survived the ordeal.

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Looking from the window she saw the doctor's gig depart; then the carriage came up the drive, and Mr. Grippe entered the vehicle and was driven off. Without knowing accurately how much liberty she had, she suddenly concluded to explore the grounds of Halidon, and putting on her hat and mantilla, she descended the staircase and passed out upon the lawn.

She was in the midst of sylvan scenery of enchanting beauty. The park surrounding the mansion contains about a hundred acres, and every part of it kept in excellent order. It was a perpetual mystery to all the inhabitants of the district that Mr. Grippe, who was stringently economical in his ordinary outlays, should spend money so lavishly in keeping up Halidon. It was the more remarkable, as he entertained very few visitors, giving one solemn dinner-party in the year, and invariably escaping all return civilities upon the plea of ill-health. His dinners were faultless and well-served, as he imported an army of cooks and waiters for each occasion. All the sights in the park and upon the wide lawn were novel to Heloïse. She watched the nimble-footed deer with delight as they glided in and out of the thicker coverts. She made the circuit of the park, pausing a moment to admire the graceful water-fowl on a lakelet at the southern boundary, and promising herself many days of enjoyment in more minute explorations hereafter, she came out upon the lawn again, her face aglow with exercise and her eyes sparkling with pleasure. The carriage was grating over the gravel as she reached the entrance. Mr. Grippe descended, and immediately assisted a lady to alight. Approaching Heloïse, who stood watching them with great eagerness, the banker presented his companion:

"Miss Mabel Grahame, Mam'selle Heloïse.'

The new-comer extended her hand, addressing the French girl a few words in her own musical language. By way of response, and with happy tear-drops glittering in her black eyes, Heloïse clasped her round the waist, imprinted two impetuous kisses, one on each cheek, and then drawing her to the house, exclaimed:

"Come, come! I shall love you as long as I live!"

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CHAPTER VI.

MABEL.

The Reverend Edward Grahame lived in London. He had one child, a daughter, "little Mabel." She got this name when her mother died, and when the gentle little fairy was the solitary light left in her father's desolate household. Mr. Grahame had a missionary chapel in Blackfriars, with an assured revenue of about a hundred pounds, which he supplemented by literary work that yielded him as much more. He was a "younger son," a dozen lives between him and the family inheritance, with one brother in the navy, one in the army, and the elder the perpetual member of the Lower House from his native borough.

As a matter of course the church was the natural field for the fourth son. The other vocations for men of gentle breeding being bespoken for his brothers, the Reverend Edward quietly fell into his predestined groove. The missionary post was the first that offered, and after a few years of conscientious labor, of frequent contact with poverty and vice in distress, and especially after his own dire calamity in the loss of his wife, he became so engrossed in his work, so heartily interested in his humble flock, that no preferment would have tempted him away if the opportunity had been presented. An eccentric old rector took a fancy to the young clergyman, and left him his library at his death, and this was the most valuable of his earthly possessions. He was a lover of books, and this gift was a mine of wealth to him. As his daughter grew up to womanhood, manifesting no ordinary powers of mind, he found delight in the task of instructing her in various branches of lore usually unexplored by the gentler sex. She was an accomplished Greek and Latin scholar, and as her father was master of two or three modern languages, he had transferred this knowledge to her also. The maid-of-all-work, who had been the solitary servant of Mr. Grahame since his beginning of housekeeping, had instructed Mabel in various feminine arts in rude fashion, but at the date of this story she was probably the most erudite young gentlewoman in England in classical learning, and the most ignorant in all those accomplishments, necessary and otherwise, in which young ladies are expected to excel.

The literary work in which Mr. Grahame engaged was double. He was making a book, and his whole soul was in it. He had spent

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years upon it, and he loved it. In addition to this grand work, he did a great deal of fitful writing at odd times, for which he received some small remuneration. The idea of getting money for the book never entered his mind, and it was all the better for the book that it did not. But the "money writing" was a far different occupation, and he enjoyed that also, as it brought a different set of mental muscles into play. Had he been a little more worldly-wise he would have gained better pay than he did, but he was content with such remuneration as was offered, and did not dream of hawking his wares from place to place.

Mabel had an annual invitation at Christmas to Grahame Manor, in Sussex, and for two weeks in each year she saw society. The other fifty weeks were spent with the poor and needy in Blackfriars, in such missionary work as a clergyman's daughter would naturally find in such a locality. Out of their scanty income these gentle people gave munificent donations to the just and the unjust; and Mabel's education, mental and moral, progressed in the midst of poverty, toil and vice, which were less hideous in their manifestations because of the light shed upon them from her angelic face. How much less evil in the concrete there was within the range of her ministrations, by reason of her patient kindness; how much less in the abstract, by reason of her valorous conflicts with the devil in his stronghold, no mortal may know. Doubtless there is a record elsewhere, where the story of dauntless courage that resisted, and the no less dauntless courage that endured, is preserved.

She was not much of a favorite with her cousins at Grahame Manor. She had no "accomplishments." She could not play for their dancing parties, and could not dance while another played. She had a lamentable habit of speaking the truth, in an absurdly simple fashion, which sometimes disconcerted her interlocutors. She saw so many actual woes in Blackfriars that she could not get up a polite sympathy for imaginary woes in Sussex. She had no fine dresses, and she steadfastly refused to borrow from her cousins, no matter what company was coming. But the younger children—and their name was legion—fairly worshipped her, and no doubt the regularly recurring invitation was due to their clamors. Christmas would be shorn of half its jollity were Cousin Mabel absent, and her two weeks were mainly spent in the society of these young vagabonds, and in the midst of profusion the more noticeable by contrast with her economical home.

There came a time when the literary work would not sell. Mr.

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Grahame was dismayed to find himself in positive straits. They did not owe any debts; it was part of their religion to "owe no man anything." And they knew how to dispense with accustomed comforts too. But they had some pensioners who relied upon the parson for certain luxuries, needed because of age and infirmity, and he had counted upon the proceeds of his writings to supply these needs. Their wealthy relations in Sussex would have died of excessive hilarity had they overheard the grave discussions between father and daughter as to the possible modes of egress from their difficulties.

Their baker was tolerably prosperous and slightly pious. Some local matter had stirred him up to the point of writing a letter to the *Times*. It was printed, and the happy breadmaker hastened to the parson with a copy of the paper. Mr. Grahame was out, so he left the paper with Mabel. She did not see the *Times* very frequently, and she devoured it with good appetite. She read the baker's letter first, and then she read all the rest of the paper. When her father came she showed him the letter, and afterwards an advertisement. The reader does not care about the letter, but the advertisement is interesting. It ran thus:

"WANTED. — An English *gentlewoman* about twenty, who speaks French, as companion to a young French lady, and to give her instruction in English. Address, for two days, *with references*, A. G., Charing Cross Hotel. Salary, fifty guineas."

"Now, father," said Mabel, "if you can spare me a little while, maybe I can get this fifty guineas."

"Spare you, Mabel!"

"Perhaps I will not be far from you, father. You know we have to get some money for poor old Kirby and his wife."

"What do you think of doing, little Mabel?"

"I thought I would answer this advertisement. *I* speak French. *I* am a gentlewoman. *I* can refer to the Reverend Edward Grahame, A. M., Sharp street, Blackfriars, and to Sir Philip Grahame, M. P., Grahame Manor, Castleton, Sussex."

"Run down to Kirby's, daughter," said Mr. Grahame; "I cannot answer you immediately; I must think a little. Take some jelly with you."

"It is all gone, sir. I took the last to them on Saturday."

"Indeed! that is a misfortune. Well, go down anyhow and see what they need; I promised to send you. Return in an hour."

With resolute courage the parson faced the appalling proposition. To be separated from little Mabel! It was a long hour to both of

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them, but it passed. When she returned it was dinner-time. The parson had an inflexible rule, which was to "dress for dinner," no matter what the dinner was. To-day it was chops. She put a ribbon in her hair, put on a lace collar, a gift from Uncle Philip last Christmas, and took her father's arm as he came out of his chamber. The chops were too much for their appetites, poor things!

"Do you think you ought to apply for this place, Mabel?" said her father.

"Yes, sir. That is, if you think so. It is large pay for very little work. Indeed, it would be altogether pleasant but for leaving you."

"I have thought it might be good for you, child, to have so much change from your monotonous life. And it is not so dreadful as it appears. Suppose you were going to Grahame Manor for six months instead of two weeks?"

"I very much prefer Mr. A. G., even without counting his guineas. Really, father, as you have so often told me, the sound is more frightful than the substance. Nothing can prevent my coming to you any day; and poor old Kirby—"

"There, there," said her father, "you may write the note. There will be forty applicants ahead of you, and no doubt you will never hear of A. G. again. Time enough to be distressed when the substance takes the place of the sound. Write your note, child."

The postman left a letter addressed to Miss Mabel Grahame at the parson's house the next day. Father and daughter read it together:

"Mr. Anthony Grippe begs to present his compliments to Miss Grahame, and is very happy to accept her proposal. He goes to Paris to-night, and will return early in next week with the young lady referred to in his advertisement. If agreeable to Miss Grahame, Mr. Grippe would be glad to meet her at the railway station at Gloucester, on Tuesday or Wednesday next. His carriage will be in attendance on both days. His residence is Halidon, between Gloucester and Merton. He encloses a check upon Messrs. Smith, Payne & Smith for five pounds, to defray Miss Grahame's expenses, and begs to refer her to these gentlemen for any information she may desire concerning Halidon and its owner."

These two sat quietly looking at each other, after reading the polite note two or three times. It was a more prompt response than they expected, and they were rather stunned than otherwise.

"Gloucester, Merton, Halidon!" said Mr. Grahame, breaking the silence at last. "Come into the study, Mabel; I must tell you a little story."

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CHAPTER VII.

RADCLIFFE MERTON.

If Dr. Maguire had not turned into the drive at Halidon, just after he parted from the young lady, he would have seen a dog-cart spinning down the road from Gloucester, driven by a gay youth in fashionable attire, while his groom sat with folded arms by his side. As the doctor did not approve of rapid driving, and abominated that arrangement of motive-power known as "tandem," which was employed in this instance, he would probably have included this gentleman bowling along the road in his catalogue of lunatics. And if he had seen him check his spirited horses suddenly at the lodge-gates, and overheard the colloquy between him and his servant, he would have been confirmed in this judgment.

"Did you notice that lady we just passed, Tim?" said the gentleman.

"Yes, sir," replied the groom, "brown merino dress, plain straw hat and brown veil."

"No doubt; I did not observe her dress. Get down and follow her; find out everything and bring me word. Have you any money?"

"Yes, sir. Three bob."

"Here is half a sovereign. Don't show yourself to anybody."

"No, sir. What will you do with the hosses?"

"I will drive to Merton Park, and go to Rose Cottage to-morrow. Be cautious, Tim."

"All right, sir. This check-rein is too tight, sir; may I let it out a bit?"

"No; the mare is making a regular brute of herself, sticking her nose up in the air."

"Mouth bleeding a little, sir."

"All the better; she will get tired of tossing her head up, if it hurts. Go along with you! She may turn into some by-road while you are loitering here."

"I'm off, sir," answered Tim, touching his hat, and the dog-cart once more sped down the road.

"What lovely eyes!" said the driver. "I only got a glimpse of them as her veil blew aside. I would marry that girl to-morrow, if she would take me, without asking a question."

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As he drove up the hill where the doctor had taken up the lady in question, he slackened his pace a little. And if the reader were in the little fringe of bushes on the roadside whence she emerged, he would be able to study the character of this youth, now in the first blush of manhood, in so far as this was manifested in his face.

He — that is, the courteous reader — would first notice a peculiarity in the growth of the yellow moustache that covered his mouth. It appeared to grow out from his upper lip as if each separate hair had been stuck in its place like pins in a cushion, bending over and concealing his mouth. Whether this was a natural or cultivated peculiarity, the effect was to give a truculent expression to a countenance that was passably good-natured in appearance. The next point of attraction was his eyebrows. These started from his nose at a sharp angle, flaring away to the right and left, giving a feline expression to his eyes, which were of a dull lead color. So the reader would somehow feel that here was a face suggesting ferocity under excitement, treachery, possibly—variableness certainly, habitual petulance perhaps—yet all of these more or less masked by a certain thoroughbred expression of easy indifference. This was Mr. Radcliffe Merton.

It may be that a little care bestowed upon these externals would have modified their teachings. He might have combed his beard, which was a fair crop for one of his age, into normal shape, and thus have gotten rid of the animal look and the suggestion of bristles. He might have coaxed his eyebrows into the form of an arch, and thus made his eyes less cat-like. But Nature, curiously enough, always makes an ill-looking man satisfied with his own appearance, and in fact leads him to aggravate rather than amend such peculiarities as are described above. For example, Mr. Merton was rather vain of the unique hirsute growth that hid his thin lips; and while everybody else instinctively thought of bristles when they saw him, his mirror made no such suggestions to him.

Yet the reader should not be misled into thinking these unpleasant indications very prominent. While they would be instinctively impressed upon the consciousness at sight, it is likely that most of the impression would be dissipated by subsequent intercourse. Mr. Merton had a pleasant voice. He had spent the most of his life on the continent, and in good society; had been well instructed in German schools; was a good musician, a ready talker, and quick at repartee; usually good-tempered, but a terrible fighter when roused, cold-blooded and remorseless. On the whole, he was rather a favorite with young people, and only those who were old enough to heed their

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instincts would retain the memory of the distrust born at the first encounter with him. Trumpley Wailes, who had spent half-a-dozen years with him in Germany, part of the time in a little, dull town where they were the only Englishmen, entertained a brother's affection for him. The two boys were as essentially different as possible, in character, habits of thought, aspirations and purposes, yet they endured each other's contradictions with wonderful forbearance, each feeling a sort of compassion for the other's weakness. It is worthy of note that this forbearance terminated here, as these young rascals were always prompt for a fray when any others incurred their displeasure. And also, that a wrong, real or fancied, done to "Trump" ensured "Rad's" vengeance, and *vice versa*.

As this young gentleman will figure more or less prominently in the story, the brief outline sketch here given may suffice for the present. It is quite likely that he will demonstrate himself far more accurately, in the anatomical sense of the word, than could be done by pen-and-ink dissection.

Below the crest of the hill Mr. Merton met Mr. Podd. It is necessary to explain here that the gardener, in coming from Gloucester, had gone over many miles more than were requisite. His own house was half-way between Halidon and Merton, and he had seen fit to get his own dinner at home, not thinking it politic to depend upon the hospitality of the banker's stately mansion. The young squire stopped his team again when he recognised the floriculturist.

"How are you, Podd?" he said. "What grounds are you about to adorn now?"

"Grippe's."

"Indeed? Some one told me that the old gentleman was fond of flowers. I have never been to Halidon. Has he many?"

"Thousands!" responded Podd.

"Is the collection a fine one, Podd?"

"Best in this country, or any other," replied Podd, warming up a little. "It's a burnin' shame for such an old hunks to have the best flowers in the land, all shut up to hisself! If this wasn't the despotickest gov'ment in the world, it couldn't be done. He's got flowers there that I never seed nowheres, not even in books, and I don't know the names on 'em, though I know everything from a daisy to a crown imperial. He's got a lot of Japanese lilies that bang the world! If I could get one of them bulbs I could sell it for two guineas before night."

"That sounds like covetousness, Podd," remarked Radcliffe, "but I

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will get you some — or stay, Mr. Wailes can do it better. Ask him to write — "

"Don't want 'em," said Podd, rudely.

"What the devil do you mean?" said the fiery young squire; "you said just now you could get two guineas a bulb."

"I've changed my mind," replied the gardener, doggedly; "I don't want no favors from Master Wailes."

"Ah!" said Radcliffe, his eyes getting more cat-like, "you don't admire Mr. Wailes, it seems."

"Can't abide him."

"What is the cause? Out with it, man! And take care how you speak of this gentleman! He is my friend."

"Well, he's not mine, 'cause I never spoke to him. But he collared me and druv me through the hedge at Rose Cottage, before I had time to wink."

"What had you done, Podd?"

"Nothin'; not one mortal thing. The missus came up to teach *me* how to plant a rose-bush, and I on'y said I knew my own business, and that the grounds was *your* grounds anyhow, when the boy lit on me."

"Served you right too, you old rascal," said Merton, laughing. "How came you to let a mere boy handle you so roughly?"

"He took me by surprise, like," answered Podd; "how could I know he was a goin' to light on me for nothin'? Then the Squire was there too, and he would have clapped me in the lock-up if I hadn't cleared out. He's a reg'lar 'ristocrat."

"Well, Podd," said Mr. Merton, as he moved away, "you got off cheaply. Mrs. Wailes is a Trumpley of Halidon. Where the deuce did you get enough impudence to address her rudely? Get up, Maggie."

"Trumpley of Halidon!" said Podd savagely, watching the retreating vehicle. "Ay, ay! that's the whole story. When will these blessed English people learn that 'ristocrats are all made up of sound and impudence? How does Grippe of Halidon go? How would Podd of Halidon go? If we was both rolled into one, and had ten times as much money as Grippe has, and these Trumpleys was a-layin' in rags under the hedge, they would cock up their noses at us as if we was pigs. Blast the Trumpleys of Halidon! I can't abide 'em."

Mr. Merton drove on at a brisk pace, leaving the democrat to his reflections. He passed the lodge-gates of Merton Park and pulled up in the lane at the entrance to Rose Cottage. Mrs. Wailes came out to the gate to welcome him.

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"How are you, Radcliffe?" she said. "You are welcome to England. Come in. But what will you do with your horses?"

"How d'ye do, Mrs. Wailes? Glad to see you looking so blooming, ma'am. Where is Trump? Not here? I am going on to the Park, ma'am, thank you. Is Trump there?"

"No. He went to Gloucester this morning. I think he intended to drive back with you."

"Ah! I just missed him. I came away from Gloucester by a different road. Suppose I drive back for him?"

"Oh no; he may return by lanes and by-ways. He is walking, you know. We will see you this evening at the Park; your uncle has invited us to dine there in honor of your arrival."

"That's jolly! Well, then I will bid you good-morning, ma'am. All well at the Park, I suppose?"

"Yes. Stop; I have a letter for you. It came this morning. Wait, and I'll bring it out to you."

As he passed out of the lane into the highroad Mr. Merton opened his letter. It was quite laconic.

"PARIS, *Thursday.*

"Gone. Some old buffer, English, took her off yesterday. Got tickets for London. Haven't found out any names yet. Better luck next time. Yours, LANNEY."

"Gone!" said Radcliffe, as he tore up the note and scattered the fragments in the road. "Gone! Well, if I can find out that lovely angel I passed to-day, it will be all the better. Tim generally succeeds. He will bring some news anyhow. And now for the Park people. Get along, Maggie!"

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE WATCH.

Mr. Trumpley Wailes was an early riser. On the morning succeeding the day of his swimming party he went to the village to procure certain delicacies which his mother thought would be acceptable to the lady who came "down the brook" with him. When he returned with his purchases he found Mrs. Wailes perplexed over the

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note she had hastily written before her abrupt departure. Breakfast, a trifle more elaborate than usual, was waiting, and mother and son discussed the event over tea and toast.

"What do you think of this matter, Mother?" said her son, after the fourth analysis of the note letter by letter.

"I cannot reach a satisfactory conclusion, Trump," she replied. "Sometimes I fancy she is demented."

"That is very unsatisfactory, certainly. I reject that theory promptly."

"Then, I fancy there is some urgent necessity for flight and concealment. She may have run away from her home, and dreading pursuit, hurried away. She may have gone to Gloucester, to take the train —"

"That is just it!" said Trumpley, starting up. "I have finished breakfast, Mother; will you excuse me if I leave you to finish yours?"

"Where are you going, Trump?"

"To Gloucester, of course. She must go there; the luggage will be there, you know. I can easily catch her before she reaches Gloucester."

"And then?"

"And then! Ah, I don't know, Mother. It will depend upon what she says, or upon what her eyes say. Oh those heavenly eyes! Did you ever see such eyes, Mother?"

"Very pretty eyes, Trump," was the quiet reply. "But you have other things to consider. I am not sure it is decorous to intrude upon this young lady, or to seek an explanation."

The impetuous boy drew back and resumed his seat. He took the note from his pocket and read it again, and as he replaced it there came over his handsome face an expression of settled resolve.

"Mother," he said, with irresistible pathos, "if I had a secret from you it would burn itself out of my heart to yours. I am sure, dead sure, that I can never love any woman but this one, if she is not separated from me by some insurmountable barrier. I have saved her life. Heaven has sent her, I verily believe, to make my life complete. Can you not trust me to search for her, and learn why she was driven to write this unhappy note? Read it again: every word has a tear in it. If she is not a gentlewoman, and a fit associate for my gentle mother, do you not know that she could never attract your son? And if there should be any reason why you would not take her to your heart as a new-found daughter, do you not *know* that she could have no place in mine?"

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"Poor boy!" said his mother, "you have been indulging in romantic dreams so long—"

"Pardon me, Mother, this is a sober reality. Do you think she is a lady?"

"Yes, certainly."

"When you left her last night did you say nothing?"

"She looked so languid and so grateful—" and Mrs. Wailes blushed—"that I think I kissed her."

"Kiss me, Mother!" shouted Trumpley, catching up his hat, "and tell me that I may go. Rad is coming to-day; I'll return with him."

"Go then, Trump. I will not tell you to be prudent and watchful. Trump, remember that you are not so free as you would be if you had not a claim upon her gratitude."

"I understand, Mother. What a darling you are! I will never love any woman as I love you. Off I go!"

"What a tiger the boy is!" said Mrs. Wailes, as she watched him clearing the hedge at a leap. "And what troubles is he seeking in this mad adventure! But he is discreet and wise, and the soul of honor; I will wait. Will he tell Radcliffe, I wonder? No I don't; he will *not* tell Radcliffe."

As Trumpley strode along the highway he first overhauled the gardener, who was plodding towards Gloucester with the intention of making very slow time.

"There is Podd," thought Wailes—"now what will the old rascal do? If he were not such a surly curmudgeon I would speak to him. I think I will anyhow. He was insolent once, but he knew no better, probably. Ah! he has seen me and has drawn off to the other side of the road. Well, he leaves me no choice. He ignores me; I must needs ignore him," and he sailed past Mr. Podd with his serene eyes contemplating the serene sky, while Podd, also true to his nature, investigated the nature of the soil he traversed.

Then Trumpley passed the crest of the hill. While he was surveying the clouds, in passing Podd, another pair of eyes were surveying him, and their owner slipped into the shadow of the bushes on the roadside. She had to wait until a turn in the road hid him, lest he should look backward. She did not know then that he did not indulge in retrospects.

At last he reached Gloucester. He was surprised that he had not overtaken the lady. "She must be a stunner to walk!" he thought.

The station of course. All quiet there; no train due for hours. But he could ask a few questions, and he soon found the station-master.

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This was an important personage, and to-day he was specially important. Many persons were curious about the catastrophe of the previous day and asked distracting questions. The station-master had a red face; red whiskers, long and bushy, likewise. Trumpley saw how important he was, and he humored him.

Accident yesterday? Yes; might have been hawful. Rain washed away the 'butments. Nobody drownded — leastways only one young woman. Second-class. She was not dead. Somebody fished her out. Don't know her name. Knowed she was second-class because her box was in the luggage-room. Came out of the second-class carriage. Besides, that was the only one that got its passengers into the water. Box marked? Yes, sir — M. G. Must be her box, because all the rest of the luggage was claimed and delivered. Do with it? Keep it till she comes for it, of course. Where from? Lunnon.

The road had been repaired well enough to allow the passage of trains; next train due at one fifteen — would stop at Brummagem.

She would come for her luggage. The best place to wait was near the luggage-room. Evidently she had not appeared yet. On the opposite platform was a paper-stand. He would go there and keep his eyes open. There was a truck near the stand. He sat down upon it, and recalled all the events of yesterday. She must come in at the west entrance, coming from Merton. He would watch the west entrance.

He called to mind the thrill of joy when he first brought her beautiful face above the surface of the discolored flood, and the convulsive clutch she fastened upon his neck. Then the tokens of life when he got her out upon the bank. Then her yielding form when he took her in his arms and carried her to the cottage. Then the little strip of violet under her tremulous eyelids, and then the full blaze of her eyes as she threw up her arm and said, "Save me!" Then the closing of her eyes again and the outer darkness. Then his audacious theft of the little curl. And turning his back upon the world, his face to the wall, he drew forth the tress and kissed it.

What is that? A lady! But she comes down the platform from the east entrance, a thick brown veil over her face. It could not be *his* lady. Steady, majestic, composed, she passed him, two yards off, as he started up in doubt. While he looked, anxious and confused, his heart audibly thumping his ribs, she went out by the western door. Should he follow? Certainly not. Her servant was following her — a groom in a livery; his lady had no groom.

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What is that? The rattle of the coming train. One fifteen! How the time had flown! Here it comes, gliding smoothly into the station. There she is again!—on the other platform. He would cross.

"Not across the rails, sir, please," said an official. "You must cross by the bridge."

Across the bridge in a minute, and down among the passengers. Two or three men were assisting an invalid. He could not run over them. Wait until they pass. There is the brown veil just beyond them, and the eyes behind it are looking at him. Heart thumping again. What fiend invented veils! She is speaking to a railway porter. He touches his hat and points at an old gentleman, who is coughing and spluttering at a great rate. It is old Mr. Grippe. There is her groom again. Why, no! It is Tim!

"Why, Tim," said Trumpley, catching his arm as he was passing, "where are you from? Who is that lady you are following so closely? Where is Mr. Merton?"

So many questions were confusing. Tim did not know how to answer. While he stammered and hunted for a satisfactory lie, Wailes got another glimpse of the brown veil as its wearer took Mr. Grippe's arm and disappeared in the crowd.

"Lady, sir, Mr. Trumpley? What lady, sir? I ain't followin' no lady. I'm looking for Master Radcliffe, sir."

"Is he in this train?"

"Dunno, sir. I thought he was in Glo'ster, but couldn't find him. Sent me on last night to get the hosses. I must go look for him, please, sir," and Tim dived into the crowd again.

In six or eight minutes the train moved away, and the station was deserted. Suppose he looked into the luggage-room?

"Box? M. G.? Yessir. Mr. Grippe's servant got it. Mr. Grippe was here. Dunno, sir. Must be his daughter. Didn't know he had a daughter, sir; but my brother is a porter in his bank, and he says the old gent has a daughter. Has been in Paris, I b'lieve, sir—getting heddicated, I s'pose. Thankee, sir."

Miss Grippe!

This was not the culmination he expected. He would review the case as he walked homeward. What in the world could he tell Mrs. Wailes, *née* Trumpley of Halidon?

Half-a-mile from Gloucester he overtook Tim.

"Did you find Mr. Radcliffe, Tim?" he said.

"No, sir. He got the hosses and druv to Merton Park."

"Ah! and you are going to walk down?"

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"Yessir. Can't keep up with you though, Master Trumpley. I've seed you walk before now. Quare start, that. I mean that young lady you thought I was follerin'. Did you happen to see which way she went, sir?"

"Now I am sure he was following her," thought Wailes. "What does the impudent rascal mean by such a question?" This thought passed through his mind while Tim was speaking. He answered promptly, "Young lady! There were a dozen on the platform, Tim. Which one do you mean?"

"Brown merino dress, straw hat and brown veil, sir," said Tim eagerly.

"I did not notice the color of any lady's dress, Tim. I think I did see one with a brown veil. She went out of the east door, I believe. What was queer about her?" he asked suddenly.

"Oh nothin', sir; only she seemed to go out o' sight so suddent. I seed her when you caught my arm, and the next minnit she was gone. She warn't in any cab; I looked in 'em all. I was only curious about her, sir, because you ax'd me why I was a-follerin' her. That's all, sir. Good morning, sir."

"I am afraid Tim is lying," said Trumpley to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

Fencing.

When Trumpley reached Rose Cottage it was three o'clock. He found a frugal luncheon awaiting, and an invitation to dine at Merton Park with his mother. He told her all his adventures step by step, and the identity of Miss Grippe was settled in two minutes. Brown merino dresss, brown veil and straw hat — Mrs. Wailes identified the habiliments instanter. And while Trumpley accused himself of arrant stupidity in allowing her to pass him unquestioned, he was still rejoiced to remember how promptly his heart recognised her and acknowledged her proximity by trying to jump through his ribs. He did not mention that little circumstance to his mother.

"What do you think about Mr. Grippe's daughter, Mother?" he asked timidly.

"Grippe's daughter indeed! Grippe's fiddlesticks!" replied Mrs. Wailes.

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"I don't think he has any fiddlesticks, Mother," answered Trump doubtfully; "he don't look like a musical gentleman."

"Do try to talk sensibly, Trump," said Mrs. Wailes. "How could so sweet a girl be Mr. Grippe's daughter? I'm ashamed of you!"

This was in Trump's line. The rascal continued his aggravating suggestions.

"The account I received was very straight, Mother; and it cost me a shilling. The luggage-porter said his brother was in Mr. Grippe's bank—"

"Trumpley Wailes," said his mother, with crisp intonations, "you may rely upon my judgment in this case. This young lady is the daughter of a gentleman. Mr. Grippe is probably a very worthy man—"

"Mr. Grippe of Halidon, Mother," said Trump slyly.

"Yes. There were some other owners of Halidon once, before Mr. Grippe's money bought it, and I belong to their race; and consequently I have inherited the instinct by which I recognise one of my own class. I did not exchange a dozen sentences with that girl, whoever she may be, but each sentence she uttered contained a dozen proofs that she was *not* Miss Grippe."

"Suppose she should claim such paternity, Mother?"

"I should say she was deluded—had been stolen in infancy, adopted perhaps—anything rather than credit so monstrous a theory. Do you think you could fancy yourself in love with a Miss Grippe?" This was *argumentum ad hominem.*

"Ah, Mother," answered Trumpley, "I am afraid I should not stop to inquire. I cannot account for my prompt surrender, but I am sure as I can be that I have given all the love I can ever feel to this young lady. I cannot think that she is Mr. Grippe's daughter, and I intend to know all that is to be learned before the week is out. I wish you would explain my infatuation. I am ashamed of it, while I cling to it as if it were the very spring of my life."

Mrs. Wailes was somewhat given to philosophise.

"Well, Trump," she said, "you naturally feel a strong interest in a person whose life you have saved—"

"That won't do, Mother. I saved another girl's life once, but I never fell in love with her."

"What other girl, Trump?"

"There!" said Trumpley, blushing, "I have gone and let it out. Please don't ask me just yet, Mother. I will try to get her permission to tell you. Don't look so astonished. It was a small affair; but she was in far greater peril than Miss—shall I say Miss Grippe?"

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"No, sir," replied his mother, with asperity. "Oblige me by calling her some other name."

"Aphrodite?" answered Wailes promptly.

"Her initials will not correspond," said Mrs. Wailes—"M. G."

"'My Goddess,' Mother; will that do?"

"No. I don't like goddesses."

"Let me see," said Trumpley. "It was on Tuesday that I found her. I shall call her Mardi Gras. So you have both initials, Mother. Besides that, Tuesday is the most blessed day I have ever known. Mardi Gras!"

"Which reminds me of our dinner to-day. We will walk over at six. What shall we tell the Mertons about Mardi Gras?"

"Nothing, Mother. Let us keep our own counsel for the present. Don't say one word about my encounter to-day; it is likely that I shall be questioned. *Nous verrons.*"

They were a jovial party at Merton Park, and Radcliffe was the lion. He had not been in England for many months, and he was consequently plied with innumerable questions on all sides. The Squire did not get up the double rubber as he proposed. Mrs. Wailes took Miss Lucy's place in the game, and Mr. Thorne and Dr. Maguire completed the Squire's party. The young people straggled about the spacious rooms, Trump playing the agreeable to Miss Merton, while Radcliffe paired off with Sybil. They had music by fits and starts, but everybody wished to talk, excepting quiet Sybil.

This young lady has been in the background hitherto. It is very difficult to describe her, as she was undemonstrative, and perhaps unattractive. Pretty, certainly; good beyond a doubt; able to talk when she pleased, but not a talker; perfectly polished, always proper in speech and behavior, yet rarely making any lasting impression upon her interlocutors. She did not debate or propound questions. She was utterly without the power to discover coincidences and resemblances, as her sister had monopolised this faculty; and Miss Lucy was more frequently at a loss to find a counterpart for Sybil than she was to match any other mortal she encountered in the world. The Squire thought her the most faultless of beings, and it is probable that these two understood each other very accurately. The Squire would have sooner headed a rebellion against the government than thwart Baby Sybil in the least of her whims and fancies. She was the reigning authority at Merton Park, but nobody knew it, as her sway was so gentle and quiet. Will the kind reader be content with this much introduction, and allow Miss Sybil to develop herself?

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In the course of the evening Radcliffe wandered to the whist-table, Miss Merton disappeared to attend to some household cares, and Sybil and Trumpley were left seated out of sight in the deep bay-window opening upon the lawn.

"Miss Sybil," said Trumpley, "if you will allow me to tell Mother, in strict confidence, that little adventure of yours and mine, you will confer a great favor upon me."

"Undoubtedly," she answered. "I was not aware that you were pledged to secrecy — certainly not from Mrs. Wailes."

"I should not have mentioned it, however, without your permission; but I have always told Mother everything, and it hurts me to have any concealment from her."

"There is nothing to conceal from anybody," she said quietly. "I did not tell Papa because I thought it would distress him, and perhaps for fear he might jump at some rash conclusion."

"What do you mean?" said Trump, promptly and imperatively.

"I mean he might have suspected an innocent person of evil intent —"

"Do *you* suspect any innocent person?"

"I don't know. There is no proof. I would have no suspicion but for you."

"I have no suspicion," said Trump. "Let us keep quiet about the affair. I will tell Mother, and no one else. Some day it may happen that another will speak of it, and then you will be freed from suspicion also."

"I should like to tell your part of the adventure," said Sybil, softly.

"Pshaw! Excuse me. Here comes Rad; I must relinquish my seat to him. Here, Rad, come look at the moon."

"Are you making poetry, Trump? By-the-bye, I want a full account of your adventure yesterday. Out with it!"

"There is nothing more than Mother told you at dinner," replied Wailes. "A young lady fell into the water, and I pulled her out."

"Yes, but what was she like?"

"Ah! that is a difficult question. She was quite wet; her eyes were closed, and she looked pale and languid. I left her in Mother's charge, and when I got home this morning she was gone."

"Leaving a note?"

"Yes. There were a few lines on a sheet of paper, saying she was obliged to leave without ceremony."

The few lines were wrapped about a little brown curl and reposing upon Trumpley's breast at that moment, but he forgot to mention that fact.

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Radcliffe was not satisfied. He longed to ask a lot of questions, but hardly knew where to begin. Trump seemed to be fencing with him, and as he had fenced with him before, he was cautious.

"What were you doing at Gloucester to-day, Trump?" he began. This was a preliminary flourish of his foil in the way of a salute.

"I thought I might meet you, and ride back with you. But you must have driven over the east road." This was the return salute.

"Precisely," replied Radcliffe. "You saw Tim in Gloucester though? At least he says he walked with you on the return journey until your long limbs left him."

"Yes; he said he could not keep step. Anyhow, I came across the fields, through private grounds, and stopped once."

"Sybil," said Radcliffe, "don't trust this fellow's pretty speeches if he has been making any. He was watching a young damsel at Gloucester to-day. Tim says he was greatly interested in her." This was thrust number one, *en carte*. Trump did not take the trouble to parry it.

"Mr. Wailes never makes pretty speeches," replied Sybil.

"How do you know that?" said Radcliffe. "Trump, did you make any pretty speeches in Gloucester?"

"Not to a damsel, certainly," answered Wailes. "I thought Tim was very intently watching a lady, and I asked him who she was. Did he tell you?" This was a straight thrust, *en tierce*, and was a palpable hit.

"No — yes — that is, he said he was attracted by the walk of a lady, and while he was looking at her, you caught his arm and asked her name. I thought you probably followed her up afterwards, as you are such a persevering fellow."

"Not I," said Trumpley with charming indifference; "I left the station a few minutes after Tim. You were not on the train, so I walked soberly home." Then he twisted Radcliffe's weapon completely out of his grasp with the next sentence. "Once for all, I dissipate your insinuations. I make no pretty speeches to any damsel until I am owner of something equivalent to Halidon. I am not going to marry any woman who is richer than I am, and I am not going to ask any woman to share poverty with me. To-morrow I am going to make my first effort towards —"

"What?" said Sybil and Radcliffe in a breath.

"Victory, or death!" said Trump, rising. "Miss Sybil, Mother is about to break up the whist party. Ten o'clock! Mrs. Wailes heard the hall-clock, certainly. We shall have a lovely walk in the moonlight. Envy us!"

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"We will do better," answered Sybil. "Radcliffe, let us walk as far as the stile. Lucy will take Mrs. Wailes' seat, no doubt, as Papa will not quit whist before eleven."

CHAPTER X.

SYBIL.

When Mrs. Wailes and her son had made their adieux, Radcliffe and Sybil followed them out into the moonlight. Sybil slipped her arm through the older lady's, and directing the gentlemen to precede them, these two were soon interested.

"I have not asked you any questions, Mrs. Wailes," said Sybil; "but there are some things I have been curious to know about the lady your son rescued. May I ask you while we walk?"

"Certainly, my dear. You may ask any questions you please."

"Well, ma'am, I have wondered what were the circumstances of this lady — she was a lady?"

"Undoubtedly."

"You did not learn her name?"

"No. The doctor ordered quiet, and I expected to have my curiosity gratified this morning. I cannot be certain as to her circumstances. She had a few pounds in her purse. Her dress was plain, but of good material. Her departure is a mystery that I cannot fathom. She left a guinea for the doctor. Had she been very poor she would not have done that — unless —"

"Unless what?"

"Unless she is so thoroughbred that an obligation is more intolerable than privation. Trumpley has such a weakness."

"I have walked with you to-night to tell you something about him. He asked my permission to tell you, but I will forestall him."

Mrs. Wailes started. She admired Sybil greatly, and had indulged in sundry sly dreams in which Sybil and her son figured. They were only dreams. Trump had nothing, save a very thorough education, and hitherto this had not been remunerative. His father's estate, settled during Trumpley's minority, had dwindled away until it now afforded him something under two hundred pounds a year. This would not justify matrimony. Her annuity of five hundred pounds

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would cease with her life. But she had sometimes allowed her imagination to picture a rural home in Australia, where a little money would purchase many acres, and where Sybil and Trump would build a happy home and reclaim the prosperity of the old Trumpleys. There were two obstacles marring this pleasant picture; first, the tacit agreement that Radcliffe should marry Sybil, of which Mrs. Wailes had had many hints from Miss Merton; and second, the vision that Trump had found in the rushing waters of Merton's Brook on the previous day. She knew perfectly well that nothing would efface that vision from his mind and memory.

"You need not start," said Sybil, laughing; "there is nothing very dreadful to tell you. It was only a few weeks ago, on the fourth of July. There was an American gentleman at the Park that day, visiting Papa, and something he said fixed the date in my mind. I believe the Fourth of July in America is like Christmas in England. You know Christmas comes in summer in Australia."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Wailes, "but not in America."

"Well, I always get the two countries mixed up somehow. They speak English, you know; at least Mr. Clinton speaks very good English. He is the American gentleman I mentioned — such a lovely beard!"

"Indeed! But what is the story you have to tell?"

"Oh! Well, ma'am, I walked over to the mill. Mr. Thorne had told us about Mrs. Jennings' illness, and I took her some custards. Mr. Wailes was there."

"I remember," said Mrs. Wailes; "I sent him over. He did not tell me he had met you."

"The miller had a horrid dog, a great brute chained to his kennel. I noticed him when I went in, as he growled at me. When I came out I crossed the stile to walk home across the meadow, and found your son fishing in the brook. Just before I got to him I heard the rattling of a chain, and looking back, I saw the great yellow dog come tearing across the stile. I believe I screamed; anyhow, Mr. Wailes dropped his rod and ran past me to meet the mastiff.

"I can hardly tell you how it occurred, but when the dog reared up your son darted upon him and caught the brass collar, and in a minute they were rolling over the grass together. Mr. Wailes stuck to him, roaring out to me to go back to the mill and send some man down to help. I looked at them as I ran, and saw him with both hands in the collar holding the brute down on the ground. The chain was wrapped round the dog's body, and your son was kneeling

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on the end of it. This helped no doubt to keep him down, though he was struggling violently. When I got to the mill I found old Podd the gardener there. I told him to come quickly to help Mr. Wailes, and he refused. There was no one else there; Mr. Jennings was in the village. Podd was sitting on a bench outside the mill, eating bread and cheese. He was cutting his bread with a great pruning-knife, as coolly as if nothing were the matter; and when he laid the knife down on the bench beside him, I snatched it up and ran back. Mr. Wailes was waiting patiently.

"'Is anybody coming?' he said.

"'No; there is no one there but Podd, and he says he is afraid.'

"'The old rascal!' said your son. 'I don't know how long I can hold this mad brute. If I quit his throat he will fly at mine.'

"'I have brought you Podd's knife,' I said; 'is it of any use to you?'

"'The very thing! Just wait until I get my foot on the chain. Now! Is the knife open?'

"'Yes,' I answered. 'What are you going to do?'

"'Cut his throat, of course. Throw the knife over here.'

"'But I cannot look at you,' I said, shuddering.

"'You may close your eyes then. Hillo! here's Podd.'

"Podd came slowly down the bank, just as Mr. Wailes seized the knife. The dog was writhing like a great yellow snake, held down by the chain and by your son's grip of his collar. As soon as Podd saw the situation of affairs he quickened his pace, and caught Mr. Wailes' arm.

"'Don't stick the dog,' he said; 'I'll take him off. Give me hold of his collar. Quiet, Tiger! Be quiet, sir!'

"'Now, Mr. Podd,' said your son, 'let us understand matters. Take the brute off if you like; but if he should get away from you—'

"'Well?' said Podd.

"'Well,' continued Mr. Wailes gently, 'I'll kill him as soon as he is loose, and I'll cut off your ears before he breathes his last, as sure as my name is Trumpley Wailes. Now take him or be gone, whichever you like.'

"Podd took the chain in his hand, and your son arose. The dog shook himself clear of the links of the chain, and suffered Podd to lead him away. He was either completely subdued by his fright, or else he was entirely under the gardener's control. Mr. Wailes regained his rod, and throwing Podd's knife after him, he joined me in the meadow and walked nearly to Merton Park. Then he went

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back to the mill for his basket. He said he had four fine trout in it, and you expected some.

"'Are you not afraid of that mad beast?' I asked, as he bade me good-bye.

"'Which?' he answered; 'Podd or the dog?'

"'The dog, of course.'

"'Not in the least. Podd will chain him up, no doubt. I am afraid the scoundrel let him loose.'

"'Oh, Mr. Wailes!' said I, shocked.

"'Well, let us keep quiet about the adventure, and see what is said about it. If Podd is innocent I shall find it out.' And so we parted. Here is the stile. Good night."

"Good-night, my dear. Radcliffe, take good care of Sybil. Trump, give me your arm."

When Sybil and her escort were hidden under the trees, Mrs. Wailes asked her son if he had received any injuries in the "dog-fight"?

"Not a scratch, Mother. Sybil has told you about it, I see. He was a tolerably good handful, but I caught his collar at the first jump; the chain that he was dragging after him caught in a bush and held him an instant, and I had him down the next. The other brute is little less than a murderer! The staple that held the chain, fastening it to the kennel, was still hanging to it; it came out when I knelt upon it. He saw me fishing below the mill, and, no doubt, forced the staple out and so let the dog loose. Sybil came out of the mill on the other side, and when the dog saw her, he naturally ran after her. I heard the chain rasping over the stile, and got between them in time. The villain evidently intended the dog to throttle me."

"Of whom are you speaking, Trump?"

"Podd."

"Are you sure?"

"Dead sure, Mother. Though I could not swear to it, I saw him creeping away from the mill — that is, I thought I recognised him before I saw the dog. Then I saw Sybil, and I had no time to watch Podd. The case was urgent. But he was certainly at the mill when Sybil went back, and I can hardly imagine that he could get there so soon. But he had such a hang-dog expression of countenance that he confirmed my suspicion."

"What motive, Trump —"

"Hate! The poor old wretch hates me mortally. I know no reason, except that I turned him out of the grounds at Rose Cottage that day when he was insolent to you."

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"What do you intend to do about the matter?"

"Nothing. I thought if Miss Merton and I both kept silent, we might hear from some one else how the dog got loose; but I have not heard a word."

"Don't be too positive, Trump. You may be mistaken, and it is better to incur the risk of sparing the guilty than that of condemning the guiltless."

"That is true, Mother. I will not charge him with this trick until I have proof; and I will tell Miss Sybil that I recall my 'suspicions,' as she terms them."

"That is the correct term, Mr. Trump. Sybil is a sensible woman."

"True again, Mother. I admire her greatly."

"Will Radcliffe get her, Trump?"

"By Jupiter! that is a sudden proposition. Let me consider a little."

They walked on in the moonlight, each looking with great enjoyment upon the beautiful sylvan scenery. Merton's Brook was in sight as they approached the lane leading to Rose Cottage, and it seemed so innocent and placid that no one would suspect it of such misconduct as that recorded in the opening chapter of this history. As Trumpley held the gate open for his mother to pass in, he answered her last question.

"I don't think Rad can get Sybil, Mother. I have been all over the case since you suggested it. Rad is not the man for her, and she is not the sort of woman for Rad. Such a marriage would appear to me to be monstrous."

"I have sometimes thought she was the sort of woman for you, Trump," said Mrs. Wailes.

"Ah, Mother! that is still more monstrous. Mardi Gras or celibacy!"

CHAPTER XI.

TRADE.

The late Mr. Wailes was an aristocrat of the first water. Mr. Podd would have declared relentless war against him if he had known him. His inheritance was sorely encumbered when he received it, and, like a wise man, he sold his landed property, got rid

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of all debts, kept his wife's annuity intact, and making provision in his will for the thorough education of his son, departed this life. He was the more exclusive when he gave up his landed estate than before, an additional supply of pride coming with acknowledged poverty. This is very frequently the case, and the reader will probably find plenty of examples among his own acquaintances.

Mrs. Wailes took her son to Germany, and during most of his non-age he was under the tutelage of German and French instructors. The last three years of his Continental life were spent at the University of Göttingen. Master Trumpley had Radcliffe with him there, and these two Britishers had each three duels, of course — one with sabres and two with small-swords. They learned early in their first year that these little amusements were nearly inevitable, and they both prepared sedulously for the coming ordeal by taking daily lessons from the most expert masters, and spending all spare hours in sword-play in their own apartment. In the sabre-fights Trump sliced a lobe from the right ear of his antagonist, and Radcliffe improved the shape of his opponent's nose. In both his rapier-duels Wailes made a neat little hole in the sword arm of his enemy. Rad imitated his forbearance in his first encounter, with a French student; but in the second he was angry, and he inflicted a more serious wound upon a harmless youth from America, who had been driven into the duel by his German friends. He was abed six weeks after the encounter. The first blood drawn always ended the combat, by inflexible law.

These boys — for they were only boys — did not tell the story of their fights at home. Mrs. Merton would probably have bewailed her hard fate in being worried with a boy and his tricks; Mrs. Wailes would have been horror-stricken, very properly. But in reality the contests were rarely serious, as the combatants were padded three or four inches thick, and their hurts were usually only cracked crowns or scratched faces. The English boys were expert boxers, and they pummelled each other amicably with the gloves at all opportunities. The German students could not be induced to join in these exercises.

Mrs. Wailes and Mrs. Merton seldom met; they did not assimilate. The Captain's widow was rich, frivolous and fond of display, and in all of these particulars Mrs. Wailes afforded a fine contrast. Besides, the latter perpetually remembered her long ancestral line, which Mrs. Merton, having no such encumbrances, did not appreciate. The Merton blood was good enough, but whatever benefit there was in that, Radcliffe monopolised. Two generations back the

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Radcliffes had been prosperous mill-owners, without any ancestry to speak of.

Mr. Wailes, senior, had kept his views on record touching many points. He had anticipated his death many years before it occurred, and his will was a small part of the manuscripts he left behind him. There was a tolerably bulky volume, which he had entitled "Meditations," containing odd bits of philosophy, fragments of personal history, and some short arguments upon various questions of morals and manners. This book both Mrs. Wailes and her son regarded with profound veneration, and each secretly resolved to get it into type "some day" when money should be more plenty.

When they reached Rose Cottage, after their moonlight walk, Trumpley produced the volume of Meditations, and asked his mother's permission to read a passage to her. It was a short essay upon "Trade."

"I will only give you a short extract, Mother," said he; "you can read the whole essay any time."

"'I have never been able to see any wisdom in the popular judgment regarding Trade. The theory that a gentleman loses caste by engaging in commercial pursuits is born of ignorance, and is essentially upstart and underbred. I have never done anything by which money was earned, lacking ability or opportunity, or both. But in so far, I have contradicted and opposed the beneficent law which connects wage with labor, and so has every gentleman in England who fears to stain his name with trade and his hands with work.'"

"That is very sensible, Trump," said his mother, seeing he paused for her comment, "but the gentlemen of England work in a thousand ways — in political life, in the Church —"

"Yes, ma'am, that is what he proceeds to say; but he adds: 'Trade proper; buying and selling commodities and getting gain therefrom; regulating exchange, and by wise foresight earning profit in the complicated systems of banking, corresponding with commercial capitals all over the civilised world — surely these employments demand the exercise of faculties of higher grade than we usually find in subordinate political office. A polished *attaché*, who accomplishes his apprenticeship at St. Petersburg or Madrid, blossoms into the full-blown Minister at last; but he would be hopelesssly wrecked if required to write a sensible letter treating of finance or trade. It is a grand mistake to relegate these occupations to meaner hands. Finance and trade, even in their manipulations and minor details, should be managed by English gentlemen.'"

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"This is a new proposition, Trump," said Mrs. Wailes thoughtfully. "I am inclined to think your father was right, but the doctrine is rather startling. I must meditate a little before I can give a sound opinion."

"There is a word or two more, Mother," said Trumpley. "'If my son should see an opportunity to improve his fortunes, if he should have any desire to recover the status which his ancestors on both sides inherited — and lost, I know of no methods more certain or more honorable than those that offer in the various avenues of commerce. Labor is ennobling, not degrading; subordination under the tutelage of experienced masters of trade or finance is no more humiliating than subordination to college professors: and, as the culminating argument, I may add, all the advantages that are gained by liberal education, or are inherited from gentle ancestors, are helps, not hindrances, to the attainment suggested.'"

When Trumpley closed the volume and replaced it on its accustomed shelf, they sat in silence for some time, each busy with secret meditations. Mrs. Wailes was recalling a hundred tokens of wisdom in her husband's philosophy, and the extract just read brought to her mind many kindred propositions which had become part of her creed. Trumpley was thinking of the violets hidden by long lashes, and of the most direct way to get a sight of them again. He lighted her candle for her as they were parting for the night, and as he placed it in her hand, he said simply:

"Mother, I want Halidon. I have an income of one hundred and ninety-two pounds a year; I want to multiply that by fifty. Mr. Grippe got Halidon by business pursuits. If you approve, I will offer my services to Mr. Grippe to-morrow. If he won Halidon, why may not I? Answer me to-morrow, Mother dear."

"Trump," said his mother, slyly, "is it Halidon you want, or Mardi Gras?"

"Both, Mother. I don't want Halidon without her; and I am not certain that I want her without Halidon or its equivalent — that is, I desire such revenue as will enable me to give her what any English lady would covet."

"And what do you think of the comments of Radcliffe and the Squire, and all the magnates you know, about your entrance into trade?"

"That!" answered Mr. Trumpley Wailes, snapping his fingers so vigorously that they made a report like a pistol-shot.

His mother laughed at his energetic response, patted him on the back, and kissed him.

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"My son," she said, looking at him with kindling eyes, "I do not need any deliberation. You shall do as you please in this matter. Nothing but vice, or crime, or sin can degrade Trumpley Wailes. I have saved a little money — not much, but enough probably to put you into Mr. Grippe's bank in some position. Poor boy, you have a secret suspicion that Mardi Gras is Miss Grippe, after all."

"Not I, Mother," answered Trump, stoutly; "but I have a strong suspicion that she went to Halidon with him; and I have another strong suspicion that I shall follow her there, sooner or later. Good-night, Mother. I will put you in your old room over the south terrace — or —"

"Or what, Trump?"

"I'll strangle old Grippe!"

While Trumpley was divesting himself of his habiliments, he soliloquised:

"I am not going to take a penny of Mother's money," he thought; "I don't need any money. I shall offer my body and brains to Mr. Grippe for whatever remuneration he pleases; or, if he must have money, I shall sell my Consols. Suppose the old gentleman won't take me at any price? What then?

"Why, I will take my capital and open a bank next door to him. And I can get depositors perhaps.

"But how could I pay them interest? I don't know how Mr. Grippe makes interest. I shall have to go through an apprenticeship somewhere.

"If the terrible jackass who controls that stunning periodical, *The London Demonstrator*, monthly, had not returned my manuscript 'with thanks,' I might have done something in literary work.

"I must get some sleep. Another tramp to Gloucester to-morrow. Oh heavenly eyes! when shall I see you again?"

And the youth fell asleep. And then he saw the twin violets a hundred times; once, flashing out of rushing waters — earnest, pleading, full of agony and terror; then, languidly gazing at him, in semi-consciousness, upon the verdant bank of the brook; then shyly glancing at him from under drooping lids; and the last vision he got before his dreams faded away, was a look that seemed to suit the eyes exactly — trusting and loving.

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CHAPTER XII.

BROWLER BROTHERS.

It was after ten o'clock when Mr. Wailes entered the bank of Browler Brothers. He and his mother were both clients of this institution, and he was received politely. He asked for Mr. Grippe, and after some little delay he was ushered into the private office.

Mr. Grippe had cast his wig, and he looked much more respectable in consequence. He was seated at his desk, which was full of letters received by the morning mail. The balances at the credit of Trumpley and his mother were not very large, but they never overdrew, and they never asked any favors, so they were popular customers. Besides, it was an aristocratic name, and Mr. Grippe had due respect for station. He shook hands with Trumpley, drew a chair nearer the desk, and requested him to be seated. And while Wailes was meditating his plan of attack, Mr. Grippe was wondering what the deuce the youth wanted.

"Mr. Grippe," said Trumpley at last, "you are aware that my income is not very large?"

"Wants a loan," said Grippe to himself, as he bowed in the equivocal manner peculiar to bankers when you ask them for money upon doubtful security.

"Well, sir," continued Trump, "I have determined to add to it by some sort of useful occupation. And I have come to you first, hoping I could find the opportunity here and in your service."

This was decidedly a plunge *in medias res*.

"I am not sure that I understand you," said Mr. Grippe, pushing his chair back from the desk and looking through his spectacles at the embryo banker.

"It is very plain, sir," replied Trumpley. "I wish to engage in some employment that will add to my revenue. I do not know what I can do, but you can measure my capabilities, no doubt. I know two or three languages—"

"French and German?" said Grippe.

"Both, sir, quite as well as English. Also the ancient tongues. But I am totally ignorant of the details of business, and feel very doubtful—"

"If you can read and write French and German," said Mr. Grippe, "you can be of some slight use to me at once. My corresponding

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clerk is ill; probably will never be better. I have a note from him this morning offering his resignation. Poor fellow, he has a wife and child."

"Will you allow me," said Trump eagerly, "to act as his substitute — not for pay, but to keep his place until he gets better? Let his salary go on, and I will work like a Trojan to master the duties of the position. Only a little patience, a little allowance for the blunders of ignorance, and I shall satisfy you within a week."

"Humph!" said Mr. Grippe; "if I understand you, I don't see how your revenue will be increased by such an arrangement."

"My revenue? My dear sir, I have abundance for my present need, and I have no wife nor child. Besides, I shall be learning all the time, and so accumulating capital. I do hope you will allow me to try."

"Please to write your name and address in full. Here, sit at my desk; there is a pen. So. 'H. Trumpley Wailes, Rose Cottage, Merton, Gloucester.' That is not in full. What does H. stand for?"

"Harold."

"And you are named after Harold Trumpley?"

"Yes, sir — my uncle."

Mr. Grippe fell to sneezing and coughing. He trotted around the office, lighted a cigarette and poisoned the air. When he coughed and spluttered, Trump felt like pounding him on the back, but he thought he had better not.

"You did not happen to know the original Harold Trumpley of Halidon?" said Mr. Grippe, between the paroxysms.

"No, sir; he died a few years before I was born."

"Ah, yes; certainly," another fit of choking and spluttering. "Well, you write a very fair hand; but you have not considered all the obstacles. Ignorance? Yes. But that may be surmounted in time. There are worse obstacles. Did you ever hear of a young gentleman, with a name like yours, with access to the best society in the county, going into trade?"

"I believe not, Mr. Grippe," replied Wailes, "but I am eager to set the example. I have not the slightest idea what duties I can perform in an establishment like this, but I am sure there is nothing that will damage my honor. As for the opinions of my friends, or enemies if I have any, I am utterly indifferent about them. The best society in the county would cease to be attractive to me if access to it could be lost by my engaging in any honest work. There is only one person in the world whose opinion would sway mine, and I have already consulted her."

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"Her?" said Mr. Grippe, his eyes twinkling.

"Yes, sir — my mother."

"Ah! Then you have met no other woman whose opinion you would consult?"

"No, sir — that is — I don't know, sir," and Trumpley blushed beautifully, while Mr. Grippe watched him with rat-like eyes. "There *is* another woman in the world, with whom I have scarcely spoken, who might exert some influence over me and my actions if I knew her. I don't even know her name, sir. I have seen her but once or twice, and she has suddenly disappeared."

"Have you no idea where she is?" said the banker, still watching.

"Yes, sir; I think she is near Gloucester. I hope to ask your aid when I search for her —"

"Ah, well," said Mr. Grippe suddenly, "time enough for that. What salary will you expect?"

"Whatever you please, sir."

"Pooh! That is a poor beginning. Always make your contracts accurately at the beginning, and then stick to your engagements. How much do you want?"

"Really, Mr. Grippe, it is not possible for me to answer you. Suppose you take me for a time on trial, or let me take your ailing clerk's place, while you continue his salary."

"Tom Brand, you mean. I give him two hundred a year. Do not distress yourself about him; his salary will be continued while he lives, and when he dies his wife will be provided for. I gave him an additional fifty two years ago upon condition that he invested it in life insurance. The policy is in my safe. When do you wish to begin?"

"This morning, if you please."

"Very well. One preliminary word. There is a law in trade founded in good morals: all the secrets of a house are sacred, and all the transactions of a house are secrets. That is to say, that it is immoral to speak of the affairs of your house beyond its walls. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly. And allow me one preliminary word. I shall speak to you always with entire frankness. If you do not desire me to speak upon any topic that I may think you ought to hear of, you will only have to say so."

"Agreed," said Mr. Grippe promptly. "I will give you two hundred pounds a year at present, payable quarterly. Is it enough?"

"Munificent, sir."

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"I wish you to take charge of my foreign correspondence. Take those letters and give me a synopsis of their contents as soon as you can." He touched a bell. "Mr. Choppy, show Mr. Wailes to Brand's desk; he takes his place for the present."

Mr. Choppy was head man, cashier — the autocrat of Browler Brothers — and had been for thirty years. The clerks thought him a far greater man than Mr. Grippe, and dreaded him far more. He was a large man, with a bass voice and a bald head, his face closely shaven, a shirt collar white and sharp, always threatening to cut off his ears. A little strip of whisker would have been an enormous relief to the head, which was always polished and shining. He had mild, sleepy-looking blue eyes, which nothing escaped; and the first thing he saw in Trumpley was the soft brown moustache that adorned his visage. Mr. Choppy did not approve of beards.

"This way, sir, if you please," said Mr. Choppy, his voice pitched on the lower leger line of the bass clef. He led the way into a comfortable little anteroom furnished with one desk only. "Shall you be here long, Mr. Wailes?" asked the cashier, inviting the newcomer to be seated at the desk.

"Ah, Mr. Choppy," replied Wailes, with a frank smile, "that is precisely the question I was just asking myself. If I succeed in pleasing you and Mr. Grippe, I may finish my career here."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Choppy, speaking an octave higher. The smile and the adroit coupling of his name with that of the banker, his own in the lead, fairly vanquished him. "Well, Mr. Wailes," he continued, "you have charge of very important duties. This desk is a ver-y important desk — ver-y! Any hints you may need I shall be happy to give you, I'm sure. By-the-bye you are the only gentleman in the house who wears a beard."

"Are beards objectionable?" answered Trumpley, startled. "If so, off it goes."

"Nay," said Mr. Choppy, "do not be rash. You see you will not come in contact with customers. If Mr. Grippe did not object, I'm sure I shall not."

This was a tremendous victory for Trumpley; but the remorseless rascal hit the cashier once more, just between the eyes.

"I see among these letters, sir, one from Corfu. The writing is bad, but I can make it out. What a horrid hand the fellow writes! Perhaps you can explain —"

"Not now, my dear sir. In fact I should be at a great loss to decipher that abominable writing. The figgers are plain enough —

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drachmas, you know. Brand always had a time over those letters. Kiantokos and Company — I know them of old; a good house, though. You will not be under the usual rules, sir. Four o'clock was Mr. Brand's hour; but he always had his letters finished. Must go now. If you need anything, touch that bell and a messenger will come; Chunk will be yours. *Good* morning, sir!" and Mr. Choppy disappeared.

Chunk was a fat boy about twelve. He knew everything and was communicative. The only confusion about him was in the use of the aspirate. In half-an-hour Trumpley had learned from him all the routine of Browler Brothers' bank. In two hours he had mastered the letters, made a synopsis of their contents in English, and had sent them by Chunk's fat hands to the inner office, where Mr. Grippe sat in solitary state.

CHAPTER XIII.

D. W. C. Stratton.

The author hopes the announcement of a new name at the head of this chapter will not appal the reader. Although now formally presented for the first time, Mr. De Witt Clinton Stratton has been mentioned once or twice already in the preceding pages. That he had to come prominently into view has been well known to the author from the beginning; and he has been kept in the background about as long as he would stay. The truth is that the author has been profoundly conscious of the unmanageableness of this new character, and desired to get the foundations of the story fairly laid before he allowed this restive gentleman to disport himself among the orderly people already introduced.

Mr. Stratton was an American, born in New York and reared in Virginia. He thus "hailed" from two Empire States, and was a queer mixture of New Yorker and Southerner. He had spent several years in Germany, the last three at the same University with Merton and Wailes, and, as has already been related, was rather seriously wounded in a small-sword duel with the former. When the English lads left the University, Stratton was still abed with his wound. Radcliffe did not concern himself about his late antagonist, but Wailes paid

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him a final visit at his lodgings on the eve of their departure, and offered his services to the pale-faced invalid with hearty good-will.

"Are you going to-morrow, Wailes?" asked Stratton.

"Yes."

"Is Merton going with you?"

"Yes; that is, as far as Paris. I am going to England."

"Well," drawled the American, "I'm glad you will be parted. That fellow Merton—"

"Is my friend, Stratton."

"Yes. I know you hang to him. I don't want to separate you, and I'll say nothing against him; only—"

"Only what?" said Wailes, as he paused.

"Only that he would steal a sick nigger's soup if the chance offered. There, there! I'll say no more. You will find him out in due time."

"You are soured now, Stratton, because he gave you that ugly poke in the side. But this foolish duel was forced upon you both by these Dutchmen. You will forget all about it when you get well, which I hope will be soon."

"Did the Dutchmen select those miserable frog-skewers instead of broadswords? Ah, no! Mr. Merton knew that I had no acquaintance with the weapon."

"I assure you, Stratton," said Trump, eagerly, "that Merton and I agreed six months ago that we would stick to the foils if we had any more fights. You know I took the small-sword in my last encounter."

"Yes. And you encountered that Austrian fellow, who was considered the best small-sword in the University; and you ended the fight by bleeding him in the arm instead of boring a hole in his lungs. Well, well! let it pass; I will wait awhile."

There was a grim expression on his pale face that was ominous. Trumpley left Germany on the following morning.

While Wailes was waiting for the return of the foreign letters, with instructions as to the answers, Chunk ushered a stranger into his room.

"Furrin gent, sir," said Chunk, and vanished.

A tall man walked up to the desk. His face was covered with beard, and he was fragrant with fumes of tobacco. He quietly took the seat Wailes offered, looked steadily at him a few minutes, and then put out his hand.

"I did not expect to light on you here, Wailes," said the "furrin gent," in very good English.

"Stratton!" answered Wailes, grasping his offered hand. "I

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should never have known you but for your voice; you are as unlike yourself as possible. Where in the world did you get all that beard?"

"It just grew, Wailes. But I have lost my identity otherwise since we parted. My name is Clinton. Will you oblige me by forgetting the Stratton?"

"What do you mean?" said Trump.

"Oh, it's all legal. There was a man in my country called De Witt Clinton. My uncle, my mother's brother, was named Clinton, and he was an admirer of the other, who has been dead a century or two, I believe. Anyhow, my uncle claimed kindred, and I got my name — I mean my *pronomina* — by his influence. He died a year ago and left me some money, requiring me to drop my patronymic. I am now duly authorised by the Legislature of Virginia to call myself De Witt Clinton."

He produced some papers as he spoke, which he laid upon the desk.

"Look over these papers at your leisure, Wailes," he continued; "they will verify my statements. I have a special reason for adhering to my new name. It cost me, one way and another, a thousand dollars to get it."

"Mr. Clinton, I am happy to make your acquaintance," answered Wailes; "I don't require the papers. Your word is sufficient."

"Nay. Read the papers, please. I may need you as a reference. My present business is to open a credit with Browler Brothers, and the fellows in the front office told me to present my credentials to you. Here they are. Mr. D. W. Clinton, you see. From Kiantokos and Company, Corfu. I will come again to-morrow. Meantime, examine my credentials. When do you quit your desk?"

"At four o'clock, I believe. This is my first day."

"Well, I have rooms in Queen street. Number five. Will you look in after four?"

"Yes. For a few minutes. How the deuce did you ever get to Corfu?"

"My uncle was a merchant, and left some valuable interests unsettled in the East. He had a correspondent in Corfu, and I was obliged to go there for settlement. It is all finished now."

"Fifty thousand drachmas — and some odd," answered Wailes.

"How did you know that?" said Clinton, surprised.

"Oh, we have a way of finding things out, here," answered Wailes, laughing. "Leave your signature in the outer office, and draw for any money you need, up to two thousand pounds."

"You are a prince of bankers, Wailes. Would you mind burying

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the Stratton so completely as to avoid the mention of the name, and — except when we are alone — forgetting that Mr. Clinton ever had any other name?"

"If you wish it, Witt; — you remember we used to call you 'Witt,' in Germany?"

"Ah! I must ask you to forget that too."

"Very well. I understand that you desire the entire past buried—"

"Except between ourselves. In private, I would like to recall many things; but to all the rest of the world —"

"Skuse me, sir!" said Chunk, putting his head in at the door — "but Guv'ner says will you please step in 'is hoffis."

"Mr. Grippe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good-bye, then, Clinton. I will do as you desire," said Trumpley; "I will not speak of Mr. Stratton to anybody."

"Where is Merton?" said the American, carelessly, as he passed out.

"At Merton Park, just arrived. Have you seen him?"

"No. I shall meet him, perhaps. I am curious to see if he remembers me. You will not let him know—"

"Of course not. But your American accent—"

"*Nous verrons!*" said the American, with a sudden change of voice. "I speak English wiz an accent, and nevare git my natif tong back, except ven we meet — alone. *Au revoir!*"

Mr. Grippe only wanted to give some verbal instructions touching the replies to the foreign letters. With copies of former letters upon the same general subjects before him, Wailes had no difficulty in writing the replies, which were in English. Messrs. Kiantokos and Co. had merely written to announce Mr. Clinton's credit, and to enclose his signature. The other letters were routine documents and soon disposed of, though Mr. Wailes had some little trouble in restraining his appetite for rhetorical adornments, which did not accord with the dry details of financial correspondence. This was a fault in his literary work, and the discipline was good for him.

At four o'clock Wailes locked his desk and sallied out. He called at No. 5 Queen street, and found Mr. Clinton established on the first floor. He had three rooms, besides a dressing-closet and bath-room. The back-room was not much encumbered with furniture. A library table was in the centre. The walls were adorned with three or four good pictures, and several varieties of arms, scimitars, dirks, broadswords, and two or three pairs of foils and masks.

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"You have a regular armory, Clinton," said Trump, as he glanced at the warlike array.

"Yes. I have gathered them up at odd times and places. Let us try a pass with the foils."

"I hardly have time," replied Wailes. "I must walk to Merton to dinner, and my mother will expect me to dress for that meal."

"Only a passage or two," said Clinton, taking down the foils as he spoke; "we will not bother with the masks. I am anxious to see if I am as clumsy as I used to be. *En garde!*"

There was the usual rasping of steel against steel at the preliminary parades, then a sharper click as the two men got interested. Wailes was out of practice, but he was an expert swordsman, and warming with the work, there was a very brilliant exhibition of sword-play, if there had been any onlookers to appreciate it. Trumpley was surprised to find that his sure thrusts failed. After a sharp interchange, they separated and lowered their points. Neither had been touched.

"I did not know I was so rusty," observed Wailes; "I have not had a foil in my hand for six or eight months. And you have improved vastly."

"I have had some practice in Naples. I found an old sworder there who taught me a few new tricks. To-morrow we will put on the masks. I did not do myself justice in this encounter, as I was afraid of hurting your face."

"Had you no fears for your own?" said Wailes.

"Oh, no! I think I am invulnerable." This was said with an air of sublime confidence that thoroughly nettled Wailes. He looked at his watch, and then took off his coat.

"I can spare fifteen minutes more," he said quietly; "let us try the masks."

Clinton promptly imitated his example, and taking down the masks, tucked his flowing beard in the wire-screen. He pushed the table to one side of the apartment, giving a space of fifteen feet square in the middle of the room. The sun streamed in at the western windows as they confronted each other once more. After the salute, their blades crossed, and they stood a moment motionless, each gazing intently into the kindling eyes of the other.

"*Fendez-vous!*" said Wailes, at last.

"*A l'outrance!*" replied Clinton, laughing, as their foils rasped together.

The two athletes marched and retreated, crossing the room again and again, their weapons glancing around them like flashes of light.

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As the combat progressed, their muscles seemed to be transformed into steel. The fifteen minutes grew into thirty, and then they parted, panting.

"I have met my match," said Wailes, as he drew on his coat; "I believe the victory is still undecided. Did you touch me?"

"No."

"Did I touch you?"

"Certainly not," answered Clinton, composedly.

"You tempt me to try again, with that air of abominable conceit. But I will wait until to-morrow. Good afternoon."

"My dear Wailes, you will have to wait until 'to morrow come never,' as we say in America. Good-bye!"

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Book XX.

THE GAME AT BEECHWOOD.

CHAPTER XIV.

HAUNTED.

"Mother," said Trumpley, as they sat on the open porch at Rose Cottage, watching the rising moon, "now that my income is doubled, I begin to feel stingy."

"Have you decided upon any plans of retrenchment, Trump?" replied Mrs. Wailes.

"No, ma'am, of course not. I only venture to offer suggestions. First: Rent! Now I know of a pretty house, within half-a-mile of Gloucester, that would be cheaper than Rose Cottage."

"Where is it, Trump?"

"On this side of Gloucester," said Trump, who was safely blushing in the shadow. But his mother detected the blush in his voice.

"Is it near Halidon?" she asked, quietly.

"Yes. In sight of the lodge-gates. Oh, Mother, maybe I might get a sight of her some time!"

"That would make the rent cheaper, Trump, no doubt," said his mother.

"But it *is* cheaper, Mother. There is a bill on the window. It is ten pounds a year less than you pay here. Besides, there would be economy in shoe-leather, and I could run over to luncheon every day. That would save ten or twelve pounds more."

"It would be still better to dispense with luncheon altogether. And you might take off your boots and carry them on the road.

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Some economical people I have read of, do it. What will you do with all the money you accumulate?"

"Buy Halidon!" answered Trump, decidedly.

"I remember the sale of Halidon," said Mrs. Wailes. "It was twenty-five years ago — no, twenty-two. Mr. Grippe paid twenty thousand pounds for it, which Mr. Merton said was frightfully low. Now if you dispense with luncheon, carry your boots, and practise other methods of economy, so as to save three-fourths of your income, you can perhaps buy Halidon in sixty years."

"That would make me eighty-odd!" said Trumpley, discontentedly; "can you think of no process more rapid than that, Mother?"

"Oh, yes; you might marry Mr. Grippe's daughter."

"Jewhilliken!" said Trump, starting up. "Excuse me, ma'am, please — that is Mr. Clinton's expletive. By-the-bye, I encountered an American gentleman to-day at the bank, a Mr. Clinton. I intended to ask your permission to bring him here."

"Certainly, my son. Any friend of yours will always be welcomed at your mother's house."

"He speaks French and German, Mother. I should be very glad if you would investigate him a little. He is a queer compound, and he bothers me."

"Bring him to-morrow, then, Trump. I can give him a very passable dinner to-morrow. I am promised a turbot. It is a present from the Squire."

"I wish the Squire would quit giving us turbots and things," said Trump, discontentedly.

"Why, Trump?"

"Because we do nothing in requital. Why don't he send his extra turbots to Podd, or old Galt?"

"I fancy they could offer very little in requital, either. And it is doubtful whether they would appreciate turbots."

"Well, Mother," answered Trump, "it would be more charitable anyhow. We can buy our own turbots, if we want them —"

"There goes your new economy, Trump."

"Only we don't want them, and would not be likely to waste money in that way. Why can't he send turbots to Mr. Grippe?"

"Yes! He is an object of charity, no doubt," answered Mrs. Wailes. "Come in, Trump; I have been reading the 'Meditations' this afternoon, and marked a place for you."

The bulky manuscript was produced, the marked passage found, and Trumpley was requested to read it.

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"English gentlemen and gentlewomen have an instinctive horror of incurring obligations," it ran; "and being instinctive, there must be a law accounting for the feeling, that should be discoverable. I imagine one part of this law of race corresponds with the intense individuality belonging to Anglo-Saxondom. Your Saxon is distinguished from men of other nationalities by his sturdy independence, which he never wholly loses, even in positions of subordination. Ethnology is too young a science to speak positively, but it seems to reveal this much. Another element of this underlying law is the natural connexion between wage and labor. The announcement that the laborer is worthy of his hire, is not so much the announcement of a doctrine or principle of morals, as of a fact. A third element relates to the grand truth that there is one Giver, whose bounties do not humiliate the receiver; and probably this royalty is an incommunicable attribute. In giving to the children of poverty, the human giver is only a steward, disposing property that belongs to Another. And one steward has no right to give to or receive from another steward. Hence, I conclude that more rational enjoyment can be purchased with a shilling earned or inherited, than with a guinea given. If your friend offers a present of value, do not affront him by rejection, but take an opportunity to reciprocate, and so get from under the obligation. Both your friend and yourself will be the better for it."

"I have always had that sort of shrinking from gifts," observed Mrs. Wailes when Trumpley closed the book; "and to-day, when Mr. Merton promised the turbot, I sent that antique brooch with the Trumpley arms engraved upon it to Sybil, with my love. She admired it greatly, and its intrinsic value will pay for many turbots. Then I looked for the passage you have just read."

"You are a regular trump, Mother!" quoth Trumpley.

"By-the-bye," replied his mother, "I told the Squire this morning that you had decided to 'go into trade,' and he said you were 'An Odd Trump.'"

"Did he?"

"Yes; and he says the name will stick to you. He intends to spread the news throughout the neighborhood, and you may as well accept the title."

"It might be worse, Mother," said Trump. "I think I shall survive the infliction. Will you go look at the cottage?"

"What will become of my flowers, Trump?"

"Flowers! Why, flowers are the special attraction at t'other place; there is the greatest profusion of flowers. And there is a conservatory—"

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"A conservatory!"

"Yes, ma'am. Indeed, the superiority of the place and the insignificant rental make me think there must be something wrong about it."

"Where is it, Trump?" said Mrs. Wailes, with sudden interest. "Where, exactly?"

"It is just at the bend of the road above the lodge-gates at Halidon. There must be six or eight acres in the grounds, and they are highly adorned. The house has two gables."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Wailes. "It is Beechwood."

"Yes, that is the name. What is there about it, Mother? I see by your eyes that you know."

"That I know what, Trump?"

"Whatever there is about the place. Why should it be so cheap? Is it damp?"

"No."

"Have people had any diseases there that are worse than common ailments?"

"No."

"Did you ever know any one who lived there?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell me anything about them, Mother?" said Trumpley: "that is, is it proper for me to ask?"

"It is not a pleasant subject, Trump," said Mrs. Wailes, thoughtfully; "but I think it is time you should know the story. Did you like the appearance of the place?"

"I was charmed, Mother. I came that way," and he blushed while his outspoken honesty revealed the whole truth, "because I thought Mardi Gras was at Halidon, and that fortune might favor me—"

"There is no such thing as fortune, Trump."

"I beg pardon, ma'am, I mean Providence. I thought I might get a glimpse of the eyes—*my* eyes!—"

"That is a vulgar expression, Trump. 'My eyes' and 'my stars' and like exclamations are indecorous."

"Yes, ma'am; but I saw no eyes. There was a bill on the gate at Beechwood, discolored by the weather; it must have been there a long time. I met a plowboy near the gate, and he said it had not been occupied since he 'coomd' to this locality."

"Did he assign no reason?"

"No. What reason could he assign, Mother?"

"Only that the ignorant people in the vicinity say—"

"Say what, Mother?" said Trump, as she paused.

"That Beechwood is haunted!"

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CHAPTER XV.

RETROSPECTIVE.

The reader will understand that Mr. Harold Trumpley Wailes did not go quietly to bed like a good little boy after the rather startling words that close the preceding chapter. His mother could not resist the torrent of questions that poured forth at her announcement of the uncanny reputation of Beechwood; and as the explanation she gives really forms a part of the story, there is nothing to be done but give the substance of her account in this place.

Twenty-five years before the occurrence of the events thus far recorded, Beechwood was occupied by Captain Lennox and his two daughters, Dora and Daisy. The elder was a gay young lady of twenty-odd, robust, matter-of-fact, and pretty. The other, Daisy, was also twenty-odd, but the odds were in her favor. She was shy and romantic, sensitive and sickly. She liked books and solitude, and freely relinquished to Dora all the attentions of their masculine visitors. The reader need not dread the introduction of two more lady-characters upon the scene. They had both disappeared a score of years before the story began, and the present chapter will include the most of their history, at least so much of it as was *ante-mortem*.

Captain Lennox had been stationed in Canada a dozen years, had married there, and buried his wife there. He retired upon half-pay soon after his return to England, and had lived at Beechwood until brandy and tobacco lost their sustaining power, and his system, not accustomed to other aliments, succumbed.

Dora had numerous admirers, but there were two who seemed to run neck-and-neck, and they distanced the others. First, there was Captain Merton of the Royal Navy, a dashing young sailor, who spent his "shore leaves" at Merton Park, and who courted Miss Lennox vigorously at odd times, but laboring under some disadvantage, as the other, Mr. Harold Trumpley, lived only half-a-mile off, and was the owner of a fine estate, somewhat encumbered. This suitor was, however, rude and ill-tempered, frightfully jealous and exacting, while the sailor was polite and affable. And two or three years wore on while the queer courtship progressed, the Captain making fitful assaults, but flying off to his ship before he could "bring on an engagement;" and Mr. Trumpley, who was not a favorite in the county, pursuing Miss Lennox with grim determination, except at intervals,

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when he would be off to St. Petersburg or Palermo, or some other out-of-the-way locality across the Channel.

He left a representative, however, who did him good service in his absence. This was Miss Trumpley, his sister, who was idolised by both the ladies at Beechwood. For her brother's sake she cultivated the elder assiduously; but for Daisy she entertained a warm affection. In the absence of Mr. Trumpley the two sisters spent many days at Halidon, where they had very few visitors, and Daisy revelled amid the wealth of the well-stocked library day after day, while her more frivolous sister sought less irksome employments. Captain Merton came one day, and finding the coast clear, made formal proposals to Miss Lennox, and received his *congé*. Miss Trumpley learned the fact from the discomfited Captain, and wrote at once to her brother, then at Madrid. He came to Halidon within a week, arriving in time to attend the funeral of Captain Lennox, who died quite suddenly one night, when Mr. Trumpley was tossing on the Channel.

The half-pay ceased, and Beechwood got into Chancery. The orphan girls were supposed to be joint inheritors of the property, but other claimants appearing, litigation was inevitable. The Misses Lennox had no money to squander in law expenses, and a month after the death of their father they accepted the invitation of an uncle in London, an eccentric old bachelor, who was the rector of a suburban parish, and who asked his nieces to come and keep house for him.

Within a year or so two or three things happened. First, Daisy was married to a young clergyman, a protegé of her uncle's, and went with her husband to a humble quarter of the great city, where he had a charge. Next, her uncle died, and Dora disappeared. No one could give Miss Trumpley any satisfactory information about either of her friends, though she spent several weary days in the search of traces. Looking for Daisy as "the wife of a clergyman" whose name she did not know, was an unpromising task, and all her efforts were vain. Next, she received a letter from Paris, from Mr. Wailes, to whom she was then affianced, in which he told her he had met Dora, who was married. And finally, rumors, mingled with scraps of authentic information, reached Miss Trumpley, announcing the death of Daisy, who had left an infant half-orphaned, and the death of Dora at a little village on the south coast of France. And while she was still stunned under these dismal tidings, the body of Harold Trumpley was brought across the water and interred in Merton churchyard.

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It was fully ten years later when Mrs. Wailes heard of Beechwood again and the rival claimants. The litigation had revealed an important fact, to wit: that the title of Captain Lennox was absolute, and his daughters were co-heiresses of this property. But they had disappeared, and all that was positively known was that one of them had left an infant. By an arrangement between the other claimants, under authority of the court, the property was given in charge of a trustee, with instructions to rent it, the revenue to be held until title could be established to the satisfaction of the court, which by a grim sort of joke was the "guardian to these unknown wards in chancery." If the non-existence of these wards could be proven, the question of ownership would be narrowed down to two claimants, unless a third should arise in the person of the father of Daisy Lennox's child. It was a beautiful case in its complications, and would furnish material for a first-class romance in competent hands. In this true history, however, it is merely an episode.

The tenants would not remain long at Beechwood. They told queer stories about noises and visions. The house was very comfortable, the rent moderate, but those tenants that paid rent objected to the joint occupation of others who did not.

The stories were various. The sight-seers saw different sorts of visions, and none of them were definite or satisfactory. A female figure clad in long dark garments, with silver hair, more noticeable by reason of the contrast with her sombre habiliments, was seen once and again by several persons. Strong-minded men pronounced these visions delusions, and two or three of them in turns moved into the cottage. But they always moved out again, without solving the mystery, and generally with a theory of rat exploits that was complimentary to the powers of the rodents, who were supposed to walk the floors with human footfalls, open and shut doors, and sometimes to sigh dismally, and even to make some rude attempt at vocalisation. Because one of the sounds most commonly heard was a sort of laugh in cadence, like the refrain of a song, the strong-minded men credited this part of the performances to Boreas the blustering railer; but they all preferred his symphonies by daylight, and in the open fields.

There was one wing of the house in which was stored the furniture that had belonged to Captain Lennox. As there was no claimant who professed ownership of this property, it had been packed away in these chambers. It was very restive furniture, moving about at unseasonable hours, creaking viciously. The doors communicating

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with these apartments were all locked and barred on the outside; but some tenants had heard these doors close with a suppressed bang during the night, though the cobwebs that hung over the door-frames showed no signs of disturbance in the morning. Then the strong-minded gentlemen would turn the creak into rat-squeaks and the banging into freaks of Boreas with the shutters; but none of them had time to spare to investigate the phenomena when they were in progress.

"It is my opinion, Trump," said Mrs. Wailes, in conclusion, "that a little common-sense and pluck would unravel a great part of the mystery. I have not heard much of Beechwood since we came from Germany, and the stories I have told you are rather old. I think the house has been vacant all the time. I thought once, when you were writing your story, that I would tell you of Beechwood, and let you weave it into your imaginary creations; but I found the subject unpleasant, recalling memories that are more painful than profitable. I cannot say that I would like to live at Beechwood. I must think about it."

"And I will see about it," replied Trumpley. "If there are uncanny things there, I should like to hunt them up."

"Don't be foolish, Trump," responded Mrs. Wailes, with a little shiver. "Of course there are no uncanny things; but it would be very disagreeable to hear rats laughing and singing all night!"

CHAPTER XVI.

BALKED.

"It is my opinion," quoth Mr. Trumpley Wailes, as he approached Gloucester the following morning, "that Mother intended her valiant remark about common-sense and pluck to apply to some disinterested individual not of her blood. She did not mention Beechwood this morning at breakfast. I must not forget to invite Mr. Clinton to dinner to-day."

Mr. Clinton presented himself at the Bank during the morning and promptly accepted the invitation to Rose Cottage. It was arranged that he should call for Trumpley at four o'clock. The latter suggested a cab, which Mr. Clinton scouted. He could walk twenty miles with-

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out fatigue, and would have moonlight for his return walk. Trump very cordially invited him to spend the night with him, but the other had a "special engagement" which would compel his return.

At four o'clock the American appeared punctually. Mr. Wailes noticed that he wore his ordinary attire, and wondered if he would call at Queen Street for a black coat. But Clinton turned down the street, saying that he desired to go by Halidon. Trump was a little surprised, but assented. In fact he was thinking of making the same proposition, as he desired to take another look at Beechwood. He also did not object to a cursory inspection of the lodge-gates at Halidon.

There were certain changes noticeable at Beechwood. The weather-stained bill that was on the gate-post yesterday was gone. The gates were open, and Trumpley silently followed his companion as he coolly entered the grounds.

"I am trying an experiment, Wailes," he said. "I happened to hear that this charming spot was haunted, and having a *penchant* for that sort of thing, I have rented Beechwood. My traps are already here, and if you will come in five minutes, I will make the needful changes in my habiliments."

Trumpley was slightly stunned; the whole thing was so unexpected and sudden. But he thought he noticed a conscious intonation in Clinton's voice, and he watched him with increasing interest and vigilance.

"It certainly looks uncanny enough," observed Clinton, as their feet crunched over the gravel. "The hedges have not been trimmed for some years, I fancy. But we will mend all that. The painters are coming to-morrow. Nobody here now excepting Mrs. Hamet."

"Mrs. Hamet?"

"Yes. She lives here — occupies the south wing yonder. The agent stipulated that she should remain, and I had no objection. There she is on the step."

A tall, gaunt old woman in a black poke-bonnet; weak-eyed, as she wore green goggles; deaf as a post. The hobgoblins of Beechwood could not frighten her, as she could not hear their racket. She had a bunch of keys in her hand.

"Are you Mr. Clinton?" she said in an attenuated treble, addressing the American as the gentlemen approached.

"Yes, ma'am."

"A little louder, please," said Mrs. Hamet. "Here are the keys. Your boxes are in the Blue Room, where they have put up a bed. Shall you sleep here to-night?"

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"Yes, ma'am."

"And this gentleman?" she continued, turning the goggles upon Trumpley.

"He will not be here to-night; but I hope to have him many nights when my housekeeping arrangements are perfected. Give me a week, Wailes," he added in a lower tone, "and I promise to work great changes, and probably do some exorcising. And now amuse yourself a few minutes while I get a respectable coat."

Trumpley recalled his mother's story as he examined the exterior of the house. It was substantially built of gray stone with pointed gables. On one side there was a fine growth of ivy extending all over the south wing. There was an entrance porch here. The door was open, and Trump saw tokens of habitation about this portion of the building, while all the rest looked gloomy and forbidding, with closed shutters and grass-grown walks. The conservatory ran along one side, connecting the south wing with the main building, and the flowers that were visible through the open sashes were the most cheerful sight at Beechwood. Several stately trees, probably a dozen or more, all beeches, gave an air of solidity to the surroundings, while they concealed the house from the road. As Wailes retraced his steps, approaching the main entrance, he found the goggles regarding him intently.

It was a time when hoops were in high fashion, and Mrs. Hamet wore none. The effect of the green goggles was heightened by the lank figure draped in some dark stuff, looking like a bundle of old skirts suspended on a bean-pole surmounted by an outlandish bonnet. Trump walked directly up to her, feeling a sudden compassion for her, perhaps because of her *outré* and isolated appearance.

"You must be lonely here, dame," he said, sympathy in his eyes and accents. "Have you been here long?"

"Twenty years."

"That is almost the length of my life," answered Trump. "Have you never grown tired?"

"Tired? No. What is he? Not English?"

"Of whom do you speak, dame? Mr. Clinton?"

"Ay; of him who has taken the house. Is he English?"

"No. He is an American."

"He called you Wailes. Is that your name?"

"Yes; Trumpley Wailes, at your service, dame."

"Is he a friend of yours? I mean the Yankee."

"Yes; but he says he is not a Yankee. Here he is," and Mr.

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Clinton emerged in evening-dress. Mrs. Hamet took the keys from his hand as he passed out.

"I have taken two keys off, Mrs. Hamet; one of my sleeping-room, the other of this door. Shall I lock it now? It will be late when I return."

"As you please; but I shall be awake. The gates will be closed."

"I can easily leap the gates," replied Clinton coolly. "I beg you will not sit up. To-morrow I shall have a servant or two."

"There are not many in this neighborhood that would leap these gates after dark," muttered the old woman.

"No; probably not. That is one reason why I propose to do it. Good night, ma'am. *Allons*, Wailes."

Passing down the road, the young men paused at the lodge-gates of Halidon. There was a wall on the roadside, and nothing was visible but the upper branches of the trees within. Trumpley's heart beat more rapidly, while Clinton looked curiously at the antique architecture of the lodge.

"What a beautiful old place this must be!" said he at last, as they moved on. "When I exorcise Beechwood, maybe I'll rent this. Who lives here, Wailes?"

"Mr. Grippe."

"Indeed. Then this is Halidon? The advertisement of Beechwood mentions it as one of the attractions. Will you please consider yourself engaged to spend next week with me? I want you for special reasons."

"It will give me pleasure if my mother does not object. But I should tell you that I intended to take Beechwood, and am balked in a complicated scheme by your American rashness. What possessed you to make you take Beechwood?"

"My dear Wailes, a secret. I came to Gloucester expressly to take Beechwood. If you had engaged it, I should have pleaded very earnestly with you for it. But you could not engage it, as I made the arrangement in London a week ago. I would buy the property, but it cannot be sold."

They walked on in silence a mile or more, Wailes wondering what attractions Gloucester and its environs had for his companion. Was it possible that he knew Mardi Gras? While he was still cogitating this problem, Clinton stopped suddenly and faced him.

"What doth hinder, Wailes?" he said impetuously. "Why cannot we be friends? Oh, if I could tell you how I long for a friend! If money could buy one, I would cheerfully give a hundred thousand dollars for him!"

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"My dear Clinton," said Trumpley, touched by the plaintive appeal, "you have my poor friendship without money."

"What must I do?" continued the other, "to win your confidence? What sort of man do you admire? What sort of weapons must he wield who shall break down the barriers of British reserve and distrust? I have lived twenty-five years in the world unloving and unloved; and now that I have a great lot of money I seem more isolated than ever. What shall I do? Where can I find solace?"

"Come on, Clinton," said Wailes, slipping his hand through his arm. "We can talk as we walk. *I* am not troubled with British reserve and distrust. Come! I like you. Are you not going with me to my mother's house? Friendship is a plant of slow growth, but it grows. Wherein am I unfriendly?"

"Why the devil don't you ask me something about the house — Beechwood!" said Clinton, fiercely.

"Ah! that would be indecorous. How can I know what you would like to tell?"

"I should like to tell you everything. To begin —"

"But don't begin, please," said Trump. "Listen. In the first place I am devoured by curiosity upon this very topic."

"Really?"

"Really! But there may be some things you should not tell. So I prefer waiting a little, until you get quite cool and collected —"

"Like a blue-bottle fly in a glue-pot," put in the American, quaintly.

"Precisely, though the simile is novel. May I ask you if you have kindred?"

"No. None that I know, at least. Yonder are the chimneys of Merton. I have been there, and the Squire invited me to come again. I saw his daughters. Would you mind telling me if Miss Lucy is engaged?"

"I think not," answered Trump, surprised.

"And Miss Sybil?"

"I don't know," answered Trump, shortly.

"You don't know? Well, that means she is not. Do you remember that gambling Von Lafburg at Göttingen? Well, he spoke of you once, when a lot of us were dicing in his room, as the 'Odd Trump,' because you would not lie even by a look."

"Did he?" said Trump, starting — "and did you tell any one about it?"

"Yes; I told a countryman of mine, in New York."

"Did you tell any countryman of mine?"

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"Never. You are the only Britisher to whom I have spoken of my German life."

"Well, that is queer. Squire Merton gave me the same title yesterday. Is it so very odd, to abstain from lying?"

"Very!" answered Clinton, dryly.

"I do not like to be odd," said Wailes, after a pause; "but I have never told lies, and am too old to learn. And now I am going to speak plain truth to you. May I?"

"Now and always!" replied Clinton, "and with Heaven's help I will deal so with you. Plain truth between us, evermore."

"Well. You want an object—"

"Object! I have several. Two or three of them I am pursuing with the tenacity of a bloodhound."

"One step further, friend. Are these objects of yours all worthy? Do you look for Heaven's help in all?"

"Ha!" said the other, reddening. "I'll answer you anon. I must think."

"That's jolly!" said Trump, slapping him on the back, heartily. "Do you see that beautiful lady at the gate? That is my blessed mother. Welcome to Rose Cottage, my friend!"

CHAPTER XVII.

M. G.

"Mother!" said Mr. Wailes, as the trio sat among the vines of the woodbine after dinner, "Mr. Clinton has spoiled all my plans. He has taken Beechwood."

"Indeed!" replied Mrs. Wailes. "Well, Trump, Mr. Clinton will have a very pretty residence. I am not sorry that your plan is spoiled, however. I did not like the idea of exchanging Rose Cottage for Beechwood."

"I can easily understand your reluctance to quit Rose Cottage, madam," said Clinton.

"But there was also some—repugnance, shall I say? to Beechwood," answered Mrs. Wailes, with direct honesty.

"You surprise me, madam," said Clinton.

"It is easily explained," said Mrs. Wailes. "Many years ago I had

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friends living there, who are now dead. The associations are melancholy, as there were circumstances —"

"Pardon me, madam," said Clinton, interrupting her; "do you refer to the daughters of Captain Lennox?"

"Yes."

"Then I ought to tell you that I have heard of those ladies. Capt. Lennox married in America."

"And you have taken Beechwood on that account?" said Mrs. Wailes.

"Yes — that is, partly. I had other motives. Perhaps you know the house has an evil reputation?"

"There are some foolish stories current," replied Mrs. Wailes, "that are believed by credulous people. Something about apparitions and unaccountable noises."

"I hunted up two of the later occupants," said Clinton, "before I engaged the house. They tell very coherent stories, too, about sights and sounds, though they both ridicule the idea of anything supernatural. But they both declined my invitation to spend a few nights with me, very politely and very decidedly. They are stalwart men, too."

"And how do *you* feel about it?" asked Trumpley, curiously. "You have said so much that I venture to ask."

"I feel no trepidation," answered Clinton, laughing, "I am going to spend to-night there alone. It is not so comfortable as it will be in a few days, but I was not willing to wait."

"The house will be damp," said Mrs. Wailes, "as it has been unoccupied so long. Be wise, and accept the hospitalities of Rose Cottage to-night."

"I thank you heartily, madam," said the American, rising; "but I have lived without restraint so long that I have grown obstinate. My mind is set upon this adventure, and I cannot endure the thought of delay. Good-night, madam. May I tell you that I feel very strongly drawn to you?"

"I am quite ready to reciprocate the feeling," said Mrs. Wailes, warmly. "Let us know you better. Come see me as often as you will; the more frequently the better."

"You are more than kind, madam," replied the American, "and I cannot express my gratitude in words. But if the opportunity ever offers I shall be glad to serve you with a son's devotion. Where are you going, Wailes?"

"Only a little way up the road with you," answered Trumpley. "I will return directly, Mother."

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As they descended the steps Clinton broke off a twig of woodbine, kissed it, and thrust it into his bosom.

"A memento, Wailes," he said, apologetically. "I hope to get humanised some day, and I have made a good stride in that direction to-night. When I look at this twig hereafter, I will remember the kind accents of this lovely lady. Well may you call her your blessed mother! Ah! I never knew my mother."

"You may have a part of mine, Clinton," said Wailes; "she has evidently 'taken to you.' And now, you old heathen, what is your purpose? Are you going to bed when you get back to Beechwood?"

"Bed? No! I slept all this morning, purposely. I am going to stay awake till the sun returns. Then I shall take a beauty sleep."

"And if you have unexpected visitors to-night?"

"Well; if they come in the flesh it is not likely that they will be numerous." He put his hand in his bosom as he spoke, and drew out a pistol. "If there are not more than six, I will be responsible for every one that is within forty yards of me. If there are more than six—"

"Well?"

"I have the other in my right breast. And I have a sword in my room that I bought in Madrid. It has the edge of a razor and the point of a needle."

"And suppose they are *not* incarnate?"

"Then they will be ghosts, and harmless. I do not recoil from them."

"Do you believe in them?" said Trump, struck by the other's manner.

"Certainly I do—profoundly. Laugh if you like, I shall not mind it in the least. And now go back. You have left your mother alone. Good-night."

"Are you going to carry that pistol in your hand all the way back?" said Trumpley, noticing the barrel flashing in the moonlight.

"Oh no. I am going to discharge it when I get in some remote part of the road; I intend to reload."

"Discharge it here," said Wailes. "There is a hill between us and the Cottage, and the sound will not be heard."

Clinton looked around for a mark. A tree stood on the roadside twenty or thirty paces off, the moonlight silvering the smooth bark.

"Now count ten if you can," said he, cocking the weapon and firing the six shots rapidly. "If you want to find those six bullets

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you can look by daylight in yon tree; they should be all together, about breast-high. If you cannot cover the six with your hand, I have bungled. Good-night!"

Trumpley watched him striding up the road until he was hidden by a curve in the highway, he then walked up to the tree and found the six bullet-holes as Clinton predicted. Returning, he met his mother at the stile waiting for him.

"The night is too beautiful for sleep, Trump," she said, taking his arm, "besides, it is absurdly early. Let us walk."

"With pleasure, Mother. What do you think of my new friend?"

"I was just thinking you might lose your title if he stays here; he is an odd trump. Has he given you any hint of what troubles him?"

"Troubles him! Why, Mother, he has all that man could ask for — health, sound mind, education, accomplishments, and 'lashins' of money!"

"What sort of accomplishments?"

"He fences like — like the Count De Bussy, shoots like Leather-stocking, and I think he sings."

"Quite satisfactory, Trump, only the first two would not be appropriate in a drawing-room. As for singing, it is quite probable that you would hear it better done at the opera. Mr. Clinton impresses me with the idea that he wants a friend."

"What a witch you are, Mother!" said Trumpley. "That is precisely what he said to me as we walked down from Gloucester."

"I have discovered more than that, Trump. He has done something wrong, or he meditates something wrong — probably the latter. If you win his friendship you may be able to deliver him from present remorse or prospective repentance."

"I have had just such a feeling about him, Mother," answered Trumpley, "but it was not so clearly defined in my mind. He has made a very decided bid for my friendship, and I like him already. Perhaps some distrust of him lingers upon me because he is nourishing some evil purpose. Shall I ask him?"

"Not to-night," said his mother. "I know where to find a passage that suits this emergency. Come in and read it."

They went in, and trimming the lamp, Mrs. Wailes brought the inevitable Meditations to the table. While she was looking for the passage, Trumpley was fumbling in his breast.

"Mother," he said, hesitating and stammering, "I have something to tell you."

She looked up at him surprised.

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"You remember the morning that Mardi Gras ran away?

"Yes."

"Well, ma'am, I found something out there in the garden, near the stile."

"What was it, Trump?" said Mrs. Wailes, interested.

"A handkerchief," answered her son, producing it. "I hardly know why I did not tell you at once. I thought I would overtake her on the road and restore it. I did not look at it carefully until I was walking back from Gloucester. It is marked in the corner 'M. G.' I have kept it in my bosom ever since, like a goose; and now when you look at it, I'll put it back there, please. It comforts me to have it."

Mrs. Wailes took the handkerchief, and holding it near the lamp, glanced at it, examined the initials in the corner, and then quietly laid it on a side-table.

"Yes,"— Mrs. Wailes made this little oration with crisp composure —"yes, she told me she had lost it. Never mind, Trumpley, my son. We are exposed to these little disappointments all through life. The handkerchief is rather coarse, and the marking is not artistic. It belongs to the excellent young woman who brought the lamp just now, Milly Galt."

Trumpley thought it was bedtime. He kissed his mother's placid face, took his candle and went up-stairs. Mrs. Wailes heard his chamber-door shut; then she heard the concussion of sundry small articles of furniture, which Trumpley was kicking around the room; then she sat down and laughed fifteen minutes; then she rang for Milly, restored the kerchief, locked the door and retired.

And when the household at Rose Cottage was quietly passing through the portals of dreamland, the young American was just beginning his solitary vigil at Beechwood.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GHOSTLY.

When Mr. Clinton reached Beechwood the moon was riding in mid heaven, flooding the landscape with mellow radiance. The gates were closed and locked, but the American, seizing the mimic spear-

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heads in his hands, leaped into the enclosure. All was quiet and peaceful in the shadow of the great trees, and the young man, although full of pluck, was impressed by the solemn stillness and loneliness of his surroundings. He was conscious of a secret satisfaction in the reflection that Mrs. Hamet occupied a portion of the house; and even while he smiled at his folly he knew that his pulses were accelerated when he unlocked the door and entered the mansion. His senses all alert, he heard a long-drawn sigh as he crossed the threshold.

"Wind!" said Mr. Clinton.

No doubt. He lighted a match, and finding a candle on the table, soon dispelled the gloom of the interior.

This room was merely the entrance-hall, containing only an antique oaken table, and two settles of the same material and fashion. His first business was to investigate the acoustic phenomenon he had noticed; or, on second thought, he must first reload the pistol he had discharged on leaving Rose Cottage.

He took a small box of cartridges from his pocket and refilled the six chambers, carefully examining each cartridge as it slipped into place. They were all perfect.

"I can't shoot at a puff of wind," he muttered.

Leaving the candle on the table he returned to the door-sill, and opening and closing the door, listened for a repetition of the sound. In vain. The door creaked slightly on its hinges, and after several efforts he concluded to accept this as the explanation of, or substitute for, the sigh. So he locked the outer door, and taking his candle, ascended the broad stairs.

Another hall, corresponding with the one below, except that there were more doors in the He had been through them all in daylight, and now they were all locked, excepting that which led into his sleeping apartment. A corridor at the end of the second hall ran the length of the house, but the door leading into this passage was also closed. A tall, old-fashioned clock stood at the head of the stairs, and as Clinton passed it uttered a preliminary growl and struck eleven. He heard the rumbling echoes of the strokes drearily repeated down the stairs, through the closed corridor, and in the deserted rooms beyond his own. He opened the door of his chamber and entered.

It was a spacious room, with two large windows looking out upon the grounds in front of the house, two or three trunks in one corner, a bedstead in another, a table holding a portable writing-desk, a portmanteau, and a long sword. He placed his candle on the table and took up the weapon, drawing the bright blade out of the steel scab-

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bard. He examined hilt and point and edge with great care, and, as if satisfied with the scrutiny, laid the sword on the table within reach of his hand. Opening the portmanteau, he took out a dressing-gown, a pair of moccasins, a bottle of bitter beer, a bag of tobacco, and a pipe with a long tube of American cane. The only article of furniture that merited special attention was a large invalid's chair with reclining back, adjustable at pleasure, softly cushioned, and covered with black haircloth.

His arrangements for the night were speedily made. Throwing off his coat and waistcoat, he donned the dressing-gown. He placed the candle behind the largest trunk, after filling and lighting his pipe, and then drawing the great chair to the window, he opened the sashes and threw back the blinds. There was a little iron balcony, semicircular, with a light railing, projecting from each window, which opened to the floor of the chamber. His boots were replaced by the soft moccasins, and when he took his seat at the open window, the table drawn to his side and the smoke from his pipe floating out in the moonlight, he seemed to be a very fair embodiment of *otium cum dignitate.*

While he sat thus in meditation, sipping occasionally at the beer, and refilling his pipe once and again, the hall-clock rewakened the echoes as it thumped out the midnight hour.

"I am fairly into this business," he thought, "and I must see the end of it. I should like to have Wailes here to talk to me, only I resolved to go through this investigation alone. There is no mistake about the conviction upon the minds of my predecessors. That soldier, Neville, who was a good fighter in actual warfare, was entirely demoralised. His teeth chattered when he told me of his experiences at Beechwood. Yet all of his mysterious sights and sounds are explicable — what's that!"

The leaves on the trees near the house were rustling slightly as they were moved by the gentle wind. Some insect was sailing to and fro near the window, his wings buzzing not unmusically, and the distant murmur of Merton's Brook was audible in the quiet night. Over all these sounds he heard a laugh in a strange sort of cadence, that seemed to be near and yet afar, suggesting to his mind the effort of a ventriloquist. He could not decide whether the sound came from the lodge-gates at Halidon, visible from his window, or were uttered in his chamber. The laughter was plain.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Clinton laid his pipe on the table and walked noiselessly round

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the apartment. There were two doors, that by which he had entered opening upon the hall. He listened a moment at this, but heard nothing. The other door gave access to a small dressing-room, which he entered and examined. Nothing there but bare and solid walls. He had locked the hall-door when he came in. Thinking he would look through the hall, he returned to this door and laid his hand upon the lock, when, over by the windows, he heard the sound again —

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

In a moment he was upon the little balcony, eagerly scanning the grounds on that side of the house. Nothing. Streaks of moonlight on the grass, and the shadows between. The scene was enchantingly beautiful, and in the midst of his perplexity the American could not repress the feeling of admiration of its loveliness. He took up his pipe, still alight, and pushing his chair out upon the balcony, resumed his seat and his fumigations.

"Whoever this hilarious individual may be," he thought, "it is tolerably certain that I can endure the laughter all night, if need be. My warlike preparations are all in vain; I cannot shoot at a sound. If it is a trick, which is probable, I should not like to kill the trickster, anyhow."

He puffed away at his pipe with perfect composure, hearing the tick of the great clock on the staircase. The sound was the more distinct by reason of the quietness of all beside. He could still hear the leaves rustling, the constant murmur of the stream, and occasionally the buzzing of the insect careering by on expanded wings. Everything around him invited repose, but Mr. Clinton was not sleepy. His mind was very busy, as his visit to Rose Cottage had awakened old memories; and as he recalled the conversations with Mrs. Wailes and her son, he forgot the mysterious laughter and all his present surroundings. Then he heard the premonitory growl of the clock once more, and the single stroke reverberating through the house.

"I believe this is the 'witching hour,'" he thought, "and if these ghosts understand their business, they should be making some sort of a demonstration now. Jewhilliken!"

This exclamation was brought out by a sight that surprised him considerably. Under the beeches thirty or forty yards from him, something was moving. It was in the shadow, but certainly there. A stout cord lay on one of the trunks, having been wound around it on the journey from Gloucester. He caught up this, buckled the sword-

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belt round his waist, and fastening one end of the rope to the iron railing of the balcony, he slid down to the ground in a moment. Just as he clambered over the rail he glanced toward the trees, and the moving figure flitted momently into the moonlight. A tall figure, with flowing white hair and dark robes. His scabbard struck against the rail with a clash as he began his descent. He wrapped his gown about the weapon, leaving the hilt free, and ran swiftly to the grove, and through it, around it, down to the high wall on the roadside, and back to the house. Nothing!

He examined all that side of the mansion, listening intently. No way of ingress there. The windows were all closed and there was no door. A large part of the wall was covered with ivy, growing luxuriantly where there were no windows, and climbing to the gable. This side was in shadow, and he returned to his chamber, ascending by the rope hand over hand.

"I don't think I was asleep," he said to himself as he resumed his seat, "and if not, that was a very queer affair. I thought I saw a woman plainly, and my back was turned less than a minute while I went down the rope. The only possible way of escape for her was through the wall of the house! I will examine every inch of the wall to-morrow. The game is over for to-night, I fancy. I will smoke one more pipe and go to bed."

His judgment was correct. There were no more disturbances. He secured the shutters, tried the locks of his doors, and for greater security drew up his trunks against them. And then without undressing, he threw himself upon the bed, and before the hall-clock struck again he was sleeping soundly.

The events of this first night at Beechwood, thus imperfectly described, were sufficiently startling. The equanimity with which Mr. Clinton encountered the sights and sounds could hardly be explained, unless he had a theory to account for the mysteries, or was thoroughly skeptical concerning all supernatural things. He was certainly perplexed, and conscious that he had been baffled, as he had entered upon the adventure with entire confidence in his ability to unravel all that was mysterious, and to lay the unquiet spirits that haunted the house and grounds. So far he had failed. But there was no thought of retreat in his mind, and he fell asleep even while concocting plans for the next vigil. Besides his walk to Rose Cottage and back, he had been much occupied during the day attending to the removal of his furniture, and the repose he spoke of to Wailes as an "all morning" nap, was really only a prolongation of his usual slumber. He

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was therefore fatigued enough to sleep far into the morning, and the bright sunlight was streaming in through the Venetian shutters when he awoke.

CHAPTER XIX.

Going to Gloucester.

An hour or two before noon, two young ladies, followed by a servant in livery, walked through the lodge-gates of Halidon. Ah! Mr. Wailes, why were you not passing?

They were going to Gloucester. Probably they wanted a yard of ribbon or a skein of silk. Certainly they wanted the exercise, and therefore declined the carriage.

They were madly in love, each with the other. Of course, they had been acquainted only two or three days. Each was perfection in the eyes of the other. Each was ready to declare that no circumstances could occur to mar this burning attachment. They had talked so constantly that each thought she knew all the incidents in the life of her friend. But, in fact, both had forgotten some little incidents, such as the reception of a letter on the steps of the Madeleine, or an aquatic adventure in which a travelling bonnet had been hopelessly ruined.

As they walked, they talked. The footman overheard every word, but he was too discreet to repeat their conversation, especially as they talked in French and he had not acquired that tongue.

"*Ma belle!*" said the taller girl, "this is delicious! To escape from those dreary walls at last! Can you divine why Monsieur my father gave his consent so reluctantly?"

"Yes," responded the other gaily; "you are so vivacious, and I am so young. If you had some staid old lady governess—"

"Ah! but I have had them! Sister Clementine, at the convent. She is ninety, my dear. But she was a court lady seventy years ago, and she has told me more old scandals in an hour than you could tell in a life-time."

"But you should have an English governess, Heloïse," said Mabel. "I am not at all certain that I can do you justice. I have had no experience with pupils so well grown as yourself."

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"You can teach me this dreadful English. See! I have learned a whole sentence: 'I do not know what obstacles may be in my way, but I will surmount them.' That is good, is it not? And I know the meaning of every word."

"You must learn other things," said Mabel. "Mr. Grippe desires to have you transformed into an English lady. You must be taught all manner of customs and proprieties —"

"Bah! my little one!" replied Heloïse; "rest tranquil. One does these things without teaching. When we have visitors you shall see that I behave perfectly. What a pretty house is this! Who lives here, my dear?"

"I don't know. I will ask. James!" and the footman drew near, touching his hat.

"Do you know this place, James?"

"Yes, Miss. Beechwood," replied James.

"Who lives here?"

"Only an old woman, Miss, and —"

"And what?"

"Ghoses!"

"Ghoses! Do you mean spirits?"

"Yes, Miss;" and seeing her incredulous look, he continued: "Plenty of people have seen 'em. Nobody can live there but the old woman. And she is deef, and pretty nigh dumb too."

"Heloïse," said Mabel, "here is an adventure! James says this is a haunted place."

"Charming!" replied the French lady. "Can one go in and look at the grounds?"

As she spoke the gate swung open, and a gentleman stepped out and stood before them, hat in hand. He was a handsome fellow, with keen black eyes, a profusion of beard, with white teeth gleaming through it as he smiled and bowed.

"I inadvertently overheard a sentence or two," he said, politely, in French. "Will the ladies walk in and look at a fine old place in ruins?"

While Mabel drew back, doubtfully, Heloïse passed her with prompt decision.

"Monsieur is very good," she said. "Come, Mabel, we will look at the beautiful ivy. One minute only."

All this was shockingly improper. James looked on with astonishment, wondering if the newcomer was a French ghost appearing by daylight. Mabel put a veil between the black eyes of the stranger and her own visage, while Heloïse coolly passed through the gate.

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"I regret that I overslept this morning," said the gentleman, in English; "otherwise I should have been in Gloucester, and you would have seen Beechwood without this awkward introduction. As the best atonement I can make, allow me to say that I am Mr. Clinton. I have taken this place, which I hope to renovate shortly. I stayed here last night, ghost-hunting. There is no one here excepting Mrs. Hamet, and I beg that you will explore the house and grounds, and excuse my departure. There will be painters and carpenters here later in the day, and this is your last opportunity to see the place in its dismal aspects." He bowed again as he finished his speech, put on his hat and was speedily lost to view.

Mabel was greatly relieved by his departure. She had a general apprehension that it was unbecoming in young ladies to make early morning, impromptu visits to young gentlemen without some previous acquaintance. She was also conscious that he had done the best possible thing, to extricate them from their dilemma, by taking himself off as he did. In happy unconsciousness Heloïse was flying along the ivy-covered gable, chattering to herself volubly, while the "deef and dumb" old woman was following her with wondering eyes.

"Charming! is it not?" said Heloïse, glancing at the poke-bonnet. "Ah, madame, one must be happy here. This is more beautiful than Halidon."

"Halidon?" repeated Mrs. Hamet, catching the English word.

"Yaas. Ah, madame speaks not French. Mabel, my little one, come here." This was said in very good English. Mrs. Hamet, horror-stricken, doubtless, at this invasion of her territory, sank into a garden-seat and gazed wildly at the gate, where Mabel stood irresolute. It is probable that the old woman had never looked upon a lovelier picture — framed in by the gate-posts, the grass-grown gravel at her feet, and the waving branches of the beeches above her head. But Mrs. Hamet seemed to have contracted Mr. Grippe's asthmatic ailments as she glared at Mabel.

"On the contrary," said Mabel, in French, "come thou, Heloïse; thou art distressing the old lady. Come. We should not intrude thus. Come!"

Heloïse plucked a spray of ivy, dropped a little curtsey to Mrs. Hamet, and tripped out to her companion. James closed the gate and followed the ladies up the road. The "deef and dumb" old woman wrung her hands as she watched their retreating forms through the iron grating at the roadside.

"Again!" she muttered. "There only needs one more; and he will come next. Is there no death in the world?"

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While she stood at the gate peering through, she heard the rattle of wheels. Then she saw the vehicle, and the face of the driver, adorned with a yellow moustache sprouting out straight from his lip. He was "gotten up" in superb style, and controlled his fiery horses, driven tandem, with consummate skill. There was an air of content about the man that had more or less of conceit in it; a cat-like expression in his eyes — partly due to the shape of his eye-brows, flaring away to the right and left, and partly to a latent ferocity probably, in his character. Over all there was the smooth veil acquired from constant intercourse with well-bred people. He would pass muster in any good society.

Apparently Mrs. Hamet did not admire him. She crouched down behind the gate and watched him as he approached and passed. His groom sat by him, and was talking eagerly as they arrived opposite the gate.

"That's her, sir!" he said, pointing ahead.

"You mean 'that's she,' Tim. But which?"

"The shortest of the two, sir."

"How do you know?" asked his master.

"By her step, sir. Never seed such a step."

"Very well; we shall see in a moment," replied the gentleman, as the dog-cart glided by, carrying them out of earshot.

Mrs. Hamet peered through the gate until the vehicle was out of sight, and then slowly returned to the house.

"What devil's work is he after?" she said. "No good, certainly; nothing good in that cruel mouth and those treacherous eyes. This is my quarter-day. I will go into town and watch; maybe I shall be able to thwart this young gentleman."

An irruption of Goths and Vandals, carrying ladders and paint-cans, came filing through the gate; then a cart laden with lime and sand; then half-a-dozen masons and carpenters, carrying the implements of their craft. Mrs. Hamet had received her instructions, and opened the house to these newcomers. All the rooms were given up to them, excepting Mr. Clinton's bedroom, the housekeeper's room, and the south wing, in which was stored the Lennox property. The sounds of saw and hammer speedily broke the silence that had so long reigned there, the sunlight was let into chambers that had long been darkened, and the odor of the paint poisoned the pure atmosphere of Beechwood before the sun reached the meridian. The "deef and dumb" old woman watched the workmen until they had fair possession of the house, looking in silent bewilderment

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through her green goggles at the rapid changes they wrought in her surroundings, and then locking her own apartment, she sallied out from under the shadow of the lordly trees, and took the high-road to Gloucester.

CHAPTER XX.

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL.

When the dog-cart came into sight, the ladies dropped their veils over their handsome faces. Mr. Radcliffe Merton looked eagerly at the blank walls of grenadine, but his cat-eyes were not sharp enough to penetrate them. He was too well-bred to stare at two gentlewomen attended by a servant in livery; so he touched his mare with the whip, and spun on towards the city, now in view.

But the brilliant orbs behind the veils could see very distinctly, and each lady started and uttered a slight exclamation as the vehicle passed.

"Ah!" said Heloïse.

"Ugh!" said Mabel.

"Do you know that gentleman, *ma belle?*" said the French girl.

"No."

"Have you never seen him before?"

"Yes. The day I came here I met him in the road."

"How do you know he is the same?" persisted Heloïse.

"By his bold eyes, his *tout ensemble.* Ugh!" There was no mistaking the emphasis. Heloïse looked curiously at her companion, but made no remark.

"Ask James if he knows him," said she, after a pause.

"*Fi donc!* No!" said Mabel, positively.

"You English are a queer race!" said Heloïse; "you have a thousand proprieties that one must not transgress. Why should one not gratify one's innocent curiosity?"

"Do you not see?" replied Mabel. "It would be highly indecorous to ask a servant such a question. It would indicate an interest in a strange gentleman, and your servant might repeat your question to *his* servant."

"True!" said Heloïse. "I did not think of that. Here is the city. Bid James lead the way to the shop."

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And when Mabel was inspecting a box of ribbons, bewildered by their variety, and resolving some intricate problem relating to the exact fractions of yards she required, Heloïse passed quietly to the door, where James stood cogitating.

"James," she said, slowly and painfully, "the gentleman in the road. Wiz two horse?"

"Yes, Miss," said James, touching his hat.

"Ah! His name? You know?"

"Yes, Miss. Mr. Radcliffe Merton."

They walked down to the old Cathedral about noon. There was a service in progress. The choir was hidden, but their sweet voices filled the building, contending with the deep-toned organ for the echoes. Gloucester was not demonstrative in its piety. One old woman in an outlandish bonnet sat in a distant corner. A gentleman half-concealed behind a pillar, against which he was leaning, appeared to be absorbed — listening to the anthem. James — near the door, taking in the sights and sounds, blinking like an aggravated owl. He was a Dissenter. The two ladies, demure and quiet, were meditating. Heloïse was making injurious comparisons — contrasting the old Cathedral with the new Madeleine. Mabel was thinking of the dingy little chapel in Blackfriars, and thought she was much more devoutly inclined there. Heloïse recalled the gay appearance of the Parisian temple, the little knots of men on the stone steps, and the Englishman always watching her with cat's eyes. Mabel thought of the patient gentleman at Blackfriars, toiling day after day in the midst of his vagrant flock, and writing her cheerful letters every night, and as her eyes became moist, she pulled down her veil to enjoy a quiet little cry. And the gentleman came from behind the pillar and walked down the aisle. He glanced at the black eyes of the French girl, then at the drooping figure by her side. As Mabel looked up at his approach, aroused by his step, he halted like a trained soldier at the word of command. For while she recognised her rescuer, and shrunk back from his eager scrutiny, he also knew in his heart that the violets were behind the veil.

Mademoiselle looked composedly at the motionless youth, whose countenance expressed a variety of emotions. The certainty that this shrinking girl was she of whom he had been dreaming by daylight and in the night-watches, grew upon him, even while he turned his gaze away, repelled by her manifest repugnance. A hundred thoughts chased each other through his mind. The instinct of the gentleman forced him to forbear intrusion, when the case was so

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clearly one of unwarranted intrusion. His mother's warning flashed upon his memory, in which she reminded him that his service rendered, so far from giving him a claim, really interposed a barrier to intercourse without invitation. He recoiled from the thought of claiming gratitude, and yet there was nothing else upon which he could base a plea for recognition. He shrank from the shallow pretext the accident afforded to inquire about her health, while he saw her there, evidently free from all ailments, and evidently shunning him with desperate determination.

He was stunned and bewildered, poor fellow! So loyal was he in his devotion to the girl, and so unquestioning in his belief in her goodness, that he felt certain she had weighty reasons for her behavior. He knew that ordinary civility would prompt her to acknowledge the service he had rendered; and as she thus plainly retreated from him, and denied him permission to address her, some terrible obstacle was between them. He had asked himself a hundred times if she had recognised him in the railway station the other day. And now he knew she had.

What could be in the way? He looked into the tranquil eyes of Heloïse for an answer, and then he began to unravel a part of the mystery. He saw James blinking in stolid patience near the main entrance, recognised him as Mr. Grippe's servant whom he had seen once or twice at the bank, remembered the story he had heard of the banker's daughter "from furrin parts," and instantly invested mademoiselle with this relation. Somehow it was an enormous relief to him to reach this conclusion: Mardi Gras was *not* Miss Grippe.

What then? Had he been misled in tracing her to Halidon when he lost her at the station? Was this black-eyed vixen who looked at his perplexed countenance with such calm confidence another M. G.? Should he ask James?

Decidedly not. By some magnetic revelation he knew that the veiled goddess forbade the inquiry. But he could go out and wait until the ladies came, and then watch.

So he passed down the aisle and drew near the door. The organ, which had been adding to his bewilderment by its sonorous thunders, died away into a soft accompaniment, and a solo voice filled the arches of the venerable temple. It was a boy's voice, in clear soprano singing the anthem "Cast thy burden on the Lord," and as the other voices joined in this final service he paused to hear the beautiful harmony. When it ceased, the ladies arose and came down the aisle, Heloïse first, Mabel a step behind her. He drew back to

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give them passage. The French lady had run the gauntlet of bold Parisian eyes too many times to be disturbed by the modest glance of this blushing Englishman, so she marched by him unconscious, while he politely lowered his eyes. Then he stole a wistful look at the other, now actually within reach of his arm, and at the instant she threw aside her veil and shot one appealing look into his soul through fast-flowing tears. A motion of her hand, scarcely perceptible, repelled him as he started impetuously forward, and she passed out into the sunlight. The heavy gloom that settled upon the Cathedral as she departed chilled him, and while he stood stupidly wondering if the massive roof would not fall and bury him, a hand was laid upon his arm.

"Do you know her?"

It was the old woman in the outlandish bonnet who spoke. He tried to remember where he had seen her. Was it in Germany or at Merton? He could not tell.

"Do you know her?" she repeated eagerly.

"Do I know whom?" answered he dreamily.

"Do you know her? Her with the angel's eyes! Are you blind? Do you know her?"

"Alas! No," he answered. "Do you know her?"

"No. I knew her when she was young, twenty-five years ago. Why don't you find out?" she continued fiercely. "Are you not man enough?"

Wailes looked at her with dull surprise. He longed to get back to his office, where he could reflect without distraction upon his late encounter. The old woman continued with harsh intonations:

"I thought you called yourself Trumpley," she said. "Do you belong to that race?"

And while he looked doubtfully at his interlocutor, wondering what astounding remark would follow, she pointed her skinny finger at him contemptuously —

"'Some villain spot is in thy blood to mar its gentle strain!'

"Listen! That cat-eyed hound does not stand droning and dreaming. Awake! Are you going to let so shallow a knave circumvent you?"

So saying, she passed him and stalked out of the Cathedral, her fierce accents still lingering in his ears. He glanced at his watch and followed her. The bright light of the noonday sun seemed to mock and confuse him as he mechanically walked towards the bank.

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When he entered, he saw the woman at the cashier's counter receiving money. He went into his own room and began to assort the letters on his desk. There was a note for him from Mr. Grippe. It ran thus:

"*Dear Mr. Wailes*:— Please send proper answers to the letters. My old clerk died this morning, and I am called away suddenly. If any private letters arrive, send them to Halidon by Chunk. I shall not return to-day. Very truly yours,

"Thursday. ANTHONY GRIPPE."

Compelling his attention to the duties before him, Wailes got through the correspondence in an hour or two. Chunk brought the afternoon mail to him, having been instructed by Mr. Grippe to do so. There were three or four unimportant business letters, and one for Halidon bearing the London post-mark. It was addressed to "Messrs. Browler Brothers, Gloucester. For Mr. Anthony Grippe. Miss Mabel Grahame."

Beyond a doubt this was she! Not Miss Grippe. Mabel! Mabel! He kissed the letter which *she* would open. It was sealed with red wax, a crest on the seal. Who was the writer? A man's hand certainly. And a jealous dread possessed him on the instant. Perhaps those tears he had seen were —

"Any letters for the 'ouse, sir?" said Chunk, putting head in at the door. "James is here, just goin' to 'Alidon."

Trumpley started up and went to the outer office, the letter in his hand. James was there, contemplating a row of green boxes on a high shelf, with cabalistic figures in white paint upon their sides. The numbers ran from 1860 to 1869, and James supposing these boxes were filled with sovereigns, was endeavoring to cast up the sum contained in the ten boxes. It was something less than twenty thousand pounds, and was, he thought, kept there handy in case of a run on the bank.

"A letter for Miss Grahame, James," said Wailes.

"All right, sir. Thank'ee, sir."

"She was at the Cathedral?"

"Yes, sir. S'pose Miss Hell Weese wanted to go."

Wailes was slightly shocked at this improper language, but conscious of the impropriety of further questions, was about to retire.

"'Scuse me, sir," said James, "but is gold in all them boxes?"

Wailes looked at the boxes carelessly and relieved the servant's tortured mind.

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"Oh no. There is nothing but papers, I presume."

"I thought them figgers meant pounds," said James, disappointed.

"The figures? Oh no. Those are the dates."

One more look. He had nearly decided it should be the last. Taking his hat, he walked rapidly through Queen Street, and then by short by-ways into the road to Halidon. There was a common on the outskirt of the town, and he turned into it, and lay down on the grass under a tree. The road was visible.

The two girls first. One walking like a duchess; the other tripping like a fairy.

Then James, a few yards behind them.

Then Tim, Radcliffe's groom.

Then the old woman in the poke-bonnet.

Wailes watched them until the last flutter of their veils disappeared, and then went back to the cool shades of Browler Brothers. He had seen a copy of Burke in Mr. Grippe's room. He would study a little heraldry.

Grahame. Plenty of them. Grahames of Sussex. Crest, a falcon with a chain in its bill. That was it! The letter was from her father, brother, uncle, and the jealousy departed. And now he was at liberty to muse upon that encounter in the ancient Cathedral.

How had he recognised her at first?

Ah! He would have been conscious of her proximity if he had been stone-blind. She was half hidden behind Heloïse. Her veil covered her face. Her dress was different. But he remembered that he had no shadow of doubt as to her identity. The droop of her shapely shoulders was enough. Surely there were none like them in England.

Mabel Grahame. He seemed to know her a great deal better, now that he had learned her name. Mabel. This was a thousand times better than Mardi Gras. Mabel, Mabel, darling Mabel, with tearful eyes! Was he never to see that lovely face lit up with smiles? Why did she fly from him? Why should she repulse him so resolutely? Who could help him?

Then came another reflection. The old woman in the poke-bonnet had stung him deeply, though he had not noticed her assault at the time. She had questioned his manhood; and as he understood her as warning him against some rival with "cat-eyes," she of course had referred to Mabel. But who was the rival?

He remembered now where he had seen the woman. It was at Beechwood. And the rival could be none other than Clinton!

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"Cat-eyes!" Certainly. Had he not seen him putting six bullets together in a tree twenty yards distant by moonlight? And Clinton's sudden interest when he pointed out Halidon to him! He would think it over as he walked home. It would not do to jump at rash conclusions. And he would talk again with the fierce beldam.

As he locked his desk, at four o'clock, Mr. Clinton came in.

"Come, Wailes," he said, "I have been waiting for you. You will walk with me as far as Beechwood, will you not? In two or three days the place will be habitable, and then you will stay with me a week or so."

"I shall be a dull companion."

"All the better. I can enliven you. I will tell you some things. Come on!"

As they passed the common, Clinton startled his companion, who was thinking of the flutter of the veils he had seen a few hours ago, by referring to them.

"These ladies' veils are a nuisance," said he. "This very day one of them hid from me the loveliest face in England. And by way of equation I have, twice to-day, seen the countenance of the ugliest, cat-eyed whelp in Christendom totally unveiled!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Mrs. Hamet.

"*Ma belle!*" said Heloïse, when the two girls were passing the common, "did you ever hear of Mr. Radcliffe Merton?"

Mabel had been waiting since noon for some question from Heloïse touching the encounter in the Cathedral. How much the French girl had seen or suspected she could not tell, but she was on her guard when the sudden question was propounded.

"Yes," she answered promptly, "I have heard of him."

"Where does he live?"

"I am not sure that I know. I believe he owns or will inherit some estates in this county."

"Have you seen him?" said Heloïse softly.

"I cannot answer that question either, positively," said Mabel composedly, "but I think I have."

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"To-day?" This was said with sublime indifference.

"Perhaps; I may say yes, that is if I have ever seen him. Why do you ask? Do you know this gentleman?"

"Ah!" said Heloïse, "one never knows. Why are you doubtful?"

"Because I had heard of Mr. Merton before I came to Gloucester. I did not know what he was like, but I heard that he resided near the town. I saw a gentleman to-day that I thought might be he."

"And I also," replied Heloïse; "I saw a gentleman in Paris many times, but knew not his name. I saw him again to-day, and when you were not near I asked James. You are so exact in your proprieties! James replied to me that it was Mr. Radcliffe Merton. That is all."

They walked on in silence, each conscious that she was hiding something from the other, and each suspecting the other of reticence. If they had been more frank, or if they had continued the conversation, they would have discovered and corrected mistakes which, unexplained, colored their future lives.

Behind them came James and Tim. The latter had overtaken the footman, and entered into conversation with easy grace.

"Fine evening for walking," said Tim.

"Warm!" responded James. "You're Mr. Merton's groom?"

"Exactly!" said Tim, not having a lie at hand to meet the emergency; "you're at Grippe's?"

"Yes. Man and boy. Been there fifteen year."

"Oh, then you must have knowed the ladies yonder when they was children? Mr. Grippe's daughters?"

"No; leastways not both. Miss Hell Weese is his daughter, p'raps. Don't know."

"Which one is her?" asked Tim, innocently.

James nodded his head at the ladies and answered:

"That one."

"Indeed! The short one? Thought I seed a likeness."

"I didn't say the short one, but quite contrairy. And I don't see no likeness neither." James interposed this disclaimer with stolid dignity. "The short one is Miss Gram."

"Miss Gram!" said Tim, making a mental note. "And she is Grippe's niece or something?"

"Mebbe so," replied James gravely; "I never heard that Grippe had nieces. But mebbe he has. Has Merton any nieces?"

Tim indulged in a subdued laugh, and seeing that his companion's grim visage relaxed somewhat, he prolonged the laugh while he re-

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flected. His instructions required him to "find out everything," and his present stock of information was meagre.

"I always heard that Grippe was an old bach," said Tim at length; "I was quite took aback when I heard of his daughter. He will leave a good pot of money too, some day."

James in turn reflected awhile before *he* answered. He had heretofore considered his master in tolerably comfortable circumstances, but the recent discovery that the green boxes did not contain sovereigns had shaken his faith slightly. Mr. Grippe was about twenty thousand pounds poorer in his estimation; still it would not do to damage the credit of Browler Brothers.

"Them kind never dies," he said solemnly. "How can he leave anythink when he won't die? You'd think to hear him cough and sneeze with one o' his asmas, that every breath would be his last. But them kind never dies. I knowed a man in Glo'ster that had asma when I was a kid. He was well on to ninety then, and he choked and sneezed hisself black in the face three times a week reg'ler. We used to rush in and shake him up, and slap him on the back when the fits was on."

"Did he die at last?" said Tim, interested.

"Not he!" replied James, with an air of disgust. "He moved away. He went to the West Ingies for his health when he was about a hundred, and he got struck by lightenin out there among the niggers."

"I s'pose that finished him?" said Tim.

"Don't know; it turned him black, I believe."

"Them ladies don't look a bit alike," observed Tim; "they don't walk alike. Old friends, I s'pose?"

"Cawn't say, I'm sure. Miss Gram is a kind o' govern nurse, if you *must* know. I seed her teachin' Miss Hell her letters."

"*What* did you call her?" said Tim, in horror.

"Miss Hell Weese," answered James. "It don't sound very nice, but it's French, and mebbe it is no harm in that lingo. I s'pose Weese is the French for Grippe."

"Do you know," said Tim cautiously, "that the old woman behind us can hear every word we are saying?"

James indulged in a very broad grin.

"That old woman is Mrs. Hamet," he replied. "If you was to shoot a forty-two pounder off right under her nose, she might p'raps smell the powder. She's deef as a post."

"Is she?" said Tim, suspiciously. "You can tell sometimes when people *do* hear, but you can't allers tell when they don't."

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"No mistake about Mrs. Hamet. She has lived at Beechwood iver since I was a kid. And she has been deef all that time. How could she live so long at Beechwood if she had her hearing?"

"What's the matter with Beechwood?"

"Ghosts! Here we are. Them's the gates. Hullo! What's up now?" This exclamation was caused by Mrs. Hamet's action. She passed the two servants swiftly, and overtook the girls at the gates. They paused, seeing her approach.

"Will the ladies walk in and look at the grounds?" she said, throwing the gate open. "There is no one here excepting the painters. Mr. Clinton is in Gloucester, and will not return until evening."

Heloïse did not understand a word, but the gesture was a plain invitation, and she squeezed her companion's arm.

"I think not, ma-am," answered Mabel, irresolutely.

"Pray do not refuse," said the old woman plaintively. "You do not know how lonesome my life is here. I have not looked with pleasure on any human face for twenty years until to-day. Pray come and sit under the beeches a little time."

Something in her manner broke down all the feeble barriers which Mabel's ideas of propriety had reared. She led the way into the grounds. The shade of the trees was very pleasant after their walk in the sunny road. There were two magnificent beeches, springing from the same root, standing near the south wing, and a garden-seat encircled the two. Mrs. Hamet escorted the ladies to this seat, and after a momentary hesitation sat down at Mabel's side.

"Long, long ago!" she murmured. She took off the queer bonnet, and the green glasses that hid her eyes. Mabel noticed the tremulous hands, and her soul was filled with tender pity.

"You are fatigued with your long walk. Will you have my fan?"

The deaf woman made no reply, but gently putting Mabel's veil aside, looked anxiously into her eyes. The contact with the polished lady seemed to ennoble the older woman, and there was a new dignity and grace in her manner.

"Pardon my rudeness," she said. "I could not help it. You look kind and good. Do you engage in missionary work sometimes?"

"My father is a clergyman," answered Mabel, "and I have always been with him until now. I have been allowed to help him in his ministrations among poor people."

"And you have found other woes than those of poverty? You have met with cases where soft words were more comforting than hard money?"

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"Yes," said Mabel. "Mere poverty is a minor evil. I have never known a case where want was not a consequence of folly or wrong-doing."

"And you have been careful to say so to your pensioners?" continued Mrs. Hamet, who seemed to hear Mabel's low voice notwithstanding her infirmity. "Pardon me again, but I have supposed this was an important part of missionary work."

"I am afraid I have rather neglected that duty," said Mabel. "I have usually found so much to pity, that I have overlooked much that might be condemned."

"Do you live at — at Halidon?"

"Yes. I am living there with this lady."

"Is she related to you, if I may ask?"

"No."

"Do you know Mr. Radcliffe Merton?" said Mrs. Hamet, in a whisper so sharp and fierce that Mabel was startled. She looked curiously at the eager eyes of her questioner without replying.

"Because he is pursuing you! Do you know that?"

"I cannot tell," answered Mabel. "Why should he pursue me? I never saw him until this very week."

"Beware of him, child! Avoid him! Better you were dead than — Ah! you are pale and red by turns. What ails you? Has this hound spoken to you?"

"I have had no conversation with this gentleman," replied Mabel, speaking with quiet dignity. "He has done me a great service, and I have not even thanked him. He cannot wish to pursue me long, as he must think me both underbred and ungrateful. He has twice given me the opportunity to acknowledge my obligation, and I have twice refused to do it. All within three days."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Hamet, compassionately, as she resumed her goggles and bonnet. "Listen to the warning I give you. This Merton is a devil incarnate! Hear another word. I know a poor wretch to whom your ministrations would be helpful: will you help her if I point her out to you?"

"Gladly. Where is she?"

"Not very distant from Halidon. I will tell you hereafter. If you are rested, come look at the flowers. Bid your friend come also."

While James and Tim were waiting dubiously at the gate, the ladies disappeared within the conservatory.

"They've gone in," observed Tim. "They must have known your deef woman."

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"Never seed her until this mornin'," answered James.

"Miss Gram and her had a good talk under the trees yonder. She seemed to hear well enough too."

"Miss Gram talked mostly by signs, I dessay," said James. "Deef people learn to hear with their eyes anyway. Here comes your gov'ner."

Tim walked out in the road as Mr. Merton drew near, and after a brief colloquy, climbed up to his perch, and the dog-cart bore the worthy couple on toward Merton. Through the glass walls of the conservatory six eyes watched the retreating vehicle. Two of them black and sparkling, looked kindly and eagerly at the stylish turnout. Two of them blue and pitiful, seemed to foresee some catastrophe at the end of the gay career of the driver. And two of them peering through green goggles, seemed to anticipate the catastrophe with grim satisfaction.

The conservatory at Beechwood contained many rare plants, and it was evident that they had been carefully cultivated. Mrs. Hamet pointed out several varieties of exotics, the like of which she said could not be found elsewhere in England. Mabel listened with surprise to her enumeration of these botanical treasures, and the old woman replied to her looks.

"The care of this conservatory has been my only occupation," she observed, "for many long years. The tenants that have lived here rather avoided this part of the house, and they were not allowed to disturb the plants. I suppose what remains of sanity I still retain I owe to the gentle influence of these flowers. They at least do not lie nor defraud."

"It pains me to hear you speak in this way," said Mabel, "and I wish I could comfort you by some means."

"No doubt you can, child. And perhaps I can be of service to you also. *Nous verrons.*"

Heloïse started. "Ah, madame speaks French also," she said, in that tongue.

Mrs. Hamet was confused. But after a moment's hesitation she turned to Mabel again.

"Say to her that I know a few French phrases. I am trying to devise a plan. I cannot go to you, and you cannot come here to me; but you can bring your friend out sometimes to walk, and I will meet you in the road. There are many lovely lanes between this place and Merton, and I know them all. Will you come?"

"Yes," answered Mabel, with some hesitation. "We can bring James also. I think Mr. Grippe would not consent otherwise."

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"Let it be so then. To-morrow, an hour before noon, I will walk down the road. If I meet you, well. If not, I can return to my flowers. And now it is time for you to go, as the new tenant may arrive at any time."

"Come, Heloïse!" said Mabel, blushing; "we are transgressing terribly. If Mr. Grippe knew all, he would lock us up within the walls of Halidon for the rest of the summer. Come!"

"Bah!" said Heloïse, irreverently. "We will manage Monsieur Grippe. I am going to have the house full of company before summer is ended. *Au revoir*, madame!"

Mrs. Hamet gathered a bouquet of her rarest flowers and gave it to Heloïse.

"You will tell Mr. Grippe you have been here, of course," she said to Mabel. "Let mademoiselle show him the flowers and he will not scold."

When the girls passed through the gateway, Mrs. Hamet reëntered the conservatory, locking the door on the inside; and then proceeding to the south end, she pushed aside a box containing a small lemon-tree which moved upon rollers. At the same time a part of the south wall opened, being moved by some machinery connected with the tree-box, and when she went through the opening, which was really a secret sliding door, she closed it behind her, and the lemon tree rolled back to its place. If any onlooker had seen this queer movement without knowing Mrs. Hamet's part of the performance, he would certainly have concluded that Beechwood had a right to its uncanny reputation.

Mrs. Hamet, however, very coolly walked round the south wing and entered her own apartment.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Black Ghosts.

Mr. Podd had been engaged during the day adorning the grounds of sundry 'ristocrats at Gloucester. At nightfall, receiving his wages, he fortified his inner man with a mutton-pie and two or three pots of beer. The "pipe or two" that he smoked afterwards settled his stomach and soothed his feelings, and he went from the chop-house

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to the rooms of a "liberal club," of which he was an honored member. At this cheerful gathering of kindred spirits he found more beer and more pipes, the soothing influence being the more needful because the speeches were rather inflammatory. The club demonstrated by several deliverances that all forms of government were essentially tyrannical, that religious restraints were of the nature of a swindle, that property was robbery (this was an accepted postulate), which was the more readily accepted as a corner-stone doctrine because the club, individually and collectively, did not hold property. The halls of this association were composed of a little back-room behind a pot-house, and the top of a water-butt which stood outside, near the solitary window of the apartment. The president occupied a stool on top of this butt, and the night being hot, his official position was to be envied. Mr. Podd sat on the window-sill, and the supplies of beer were brought in at irregular intervals by a pot-boy from the front room, this Ganymede being summoned by pounding the table with pewter-mugs. The discussions were rather desultory, and in the main were more or less personal. The frightful wrongs imposed on workingmen in withholding property from them, and requiring labor for wages, were only stated for the sake of bringing the wrong-doers prominently forward, and ventilating their individual atrocities. Mr. Grippe was discussed with amazing liberality in so far as the quantity of discussion was concerned, and very illiberally with respect to the quality. The ownership of Halidon was a more grievous offence than common, because it had been in the hands of the Trumpleys through successive generations. The money that paid for the estate had been wrung from numberless widows and orphans who had kept imaginary bank accounts with Browler Brothers, and there were not wanting dark hints that some of the speakers were among the aforesaid orphans. This piece of contemporaneous history was peculiarly startling, as there was nothing in the appearance of the orators to indicate their previous affluence. Although Mr. Clinton was quite a newcomer, he came in for a share of the compliments. Some of the speakers had been bricklaying at Beechwood that day, and had seen such indications of wealth about the place as to put Mr. Clinton in the category of 'ristocrats. How a Yankee coming from a country where every man was better than every other in political and social status, could be a 'ristocrat, was the *pons asinorum* that broke up the meeting for the night.

Before this catastrophe occurred Mr. Podd had enlightened the meeting by giving a succinct history of Mr. Trumpley Wailes. There

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was such a strange combination of evils about this youth that Mr. Podd was hardly equal to the task of enumerating them. It is to be feared that some noxious ingredient in the beer had somewhat muddled the orator's mind, but he made up in vehemence of denunciation what he lacked in coherence of statement. The first count in his indictment related to the 'ristocracy of a man who was "naught better than a cadger" in the matter of worldly goods, and who yet persisted in going through life with his nose in the air. His connexion with the Trumpleys of Halidon was derided in forcible terms, inasmuch as Mr. Grippe really held the estates, and Wailes was hopelessly debarred from that inheritance even if he had any natural right to it. In a discursive vein Mr. Podd then assaulted the right of primogeniture and the law of entail; and as neither of these enormities availed Wailes, the fact of his entering "trade" to better his condition was a crowning proof of the inherent meanness of 'ristocracy. Because wage, as the fruit of labor, was the inalienable right of the working man, as contradistinguished from the gentleman; and this right, like certain other inalienable rights, was constantly impaired in all priest-ridden and law-making countries.

By way of peroration Mr. Podd broke his pipe into minute fragments, and crunching the ill-flavored remains under his boots, he stalked out of the meeting. He had to walk to Merton, and feeling a cheerful complacency in the retrospect of a well-spent day, he began his walk under the quiet heavens, not far from midnight. The route was rather longer by Halidon, so he took that road. The moon was in the last quarter, and was just appearing above the eastern horizon.

Arrived at Beechwood, Mr. Podd sat down on the roadside to rest. The night was still, excepting the slight rustling of the beeches, and Mr. Podd distinctly heard the hall-clock announcing the midnight hour. Like everybody else in the neighborhood, the gardener had heard some vague stories concerning supernatural appearances about the old mansion, and although he was thoroughly skeptical on this and all kindred topics, he crawled down to the gates with some trepidation, and peered curiously into the shaded enclosure. The south wing and the eastern end of the conservatory were visible, flecked with stray beams of moonlight; and while Mr. Podd was blinking drowsily through the gate, he clearly saw a dark figure pass from the clump of trees before him and disappear against the conservatory wall. It just seemed to melt away like mist before the sun!

Pondering this strange event, he looked again intently at the clump of beeches, and sure enough there was a movement of some sort dis-

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cernible against the gray bark. A figure came up noiselessly to the trees, then passed apparently through them in the uncertain light, and approached the gate. Podd crouched lower and watched. The figure approached nearer, now hidden by the bushes, and suddenly reappearing, it placed a foot on the lower cross-bar of the gate, a hand on the spear-head above. Both foot and hand were jet black, distinctly seen in the moonlight. Then a black face with shining eyeballs looked over the gate, and Mr. Podd scrambling to his feet, fled down the road with a prolonged snort of terror. Throwing one appalled glance back, he saw a second black countenance appear over the gate top facing the rising moon. Two black heads, two rows of glistening teeth met his eyes, and as he spurned the dust of the highway, he heard a discordant yell that was a fiendish caricature of laughter in duetto.

A mile below the gate he paused, thoroughly blown, and again squatting on the roadside, set himself resolutely to the task of unravelling the mystery.

"Black as the hinges!" he muttered. "I s'pose there must be a devil, and that was him! What did he come naggin' at me for? I didn't do nothink. There was two on 'em! I swear I saw two, their eyeballs shining like fire! There couldn't be no foolin' about that! I have to go there to-morrow to take some plants. It will be daylight then, anyway."

The ghosts descended from their perch on the gate as the gardener kicked up a dense cloud of dust in his flight, and as they walked back to the house they indulged in sundry fits of chuckling. They entered the kitchen, and while the pearly teeth glistened in the light of the lamp, they still shook and grunted in their uncouth merriment.

"Tell you what it is, Phillis," observed the male apparition, "dat fellow is gwine to run till mornin'! What de debble do you s'pose he was doin' der?"

"Don't know, Memnon," answered the female ghost. "I spect we better tell Mars Clint."

"Not to-night, Phillis woman," said Memnon. "I spect he done gone to sleep."

"He say he gwine to sot up. He fuffin' at his pipe up yonder. Smelt de smoke when we was comin' in. I'll go out and see."

She went out under the balcony. There was a light in the room above. She waited and listened for some movement, and while she stood irresolute, she heard, floating around her, above her, the echo of strange laughter:

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"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

On the instant Mr. Clinton appeared on the balcony.

"Hi! Mars Clint!" said Phillis, "was dat you a laffin'? You purty nigh skeart me out ob my shoes!"

"Is that you, Phillis?" answered Clinton. "What are you doing up and out at this unwholesome hour? Where is Agamemnon?"

"In de kitchen, sar. We was goin' to bed, but when we seed your light Memnon said we better wait awhile. We bin sottin' out dar under de trees."

"Well?"

"Dat's all, sar — only —"

"Only what, Phillis?"

"Here you, Memnon! Mars Clint callin' fur you!"

The Greek warrior came out upon the dewy grass.

"Mars Clint want to know what you done saw?" said Phillis.

"He, he!" said Memnon, chuckling, "you mean de fellow gallopin' down de road? Well, sar, me and Phillis was out dar half asleep, and Phillis she seed a tall lady sottin' on de bench round de trees."

"Tall lady!"

"Yes, sar," said Phillis, taking up the thread. "She got up and sailed along over de grass till she come to de end ob de house. Memnon follered her — he was barfooted."

"And then?" said Clinton, as she paused.

"Den sar," said Memnon, "she jist went out like a candle. She went up to de clouds or into de ground, dunno which."

"What stuff are you talking, Memnon?"

"All true, Mars Clint. She was a rale ghos'."

"Pshaw! You were asleep."

"Werry well den — what's dat?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

It came from the room above where Mr. Clinton stood at the open window.

"Any body up der wid you, Mars Clint?" said Phillis in a subdued whisper.

"I don't see anybody, Phillis."

"Mebbe you done gone to sleep, Mars Clint!" said Agamemnon spitefully.

"What did you see after your ghost disappeared?"

"Oh!" answered the African, "den I seed a fellow skrooched up at de gate. He was peepin' in through de bars. I walked down and clumb up on de gate, and he run like de debble was arter him."

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"What was he like?" said Clinton.

"Po' white trash, sar. Phillis seed him. What you think him like, Phillis?"

"Po' white trash," answered Phillis promptly.

"Some drunken fellow from Gloucester, I suppose," said Mr. Clinton. "There is the clock. One. Better go to bed, Phillis. Take your husband in and let him finish his dream."

"I s'pose you gwine to dream 'bout dat laffin," muttered Agamemnon, as he moved away. "Come in, Phillis. Ghosses don't carry on foolishness arter one o'clock."

When the negroes reached the kitchen, Memnon trimmed the lamp, and seating himself, with a lordly air demanded of his better half some rational explanation of the unearthly laughter they had heard.

"No use to ax me," said Phillis. "I done hear it twice. Mebbe it is one of Mars Clint's tricks."

"Don't believe it," said Memnon dogmatically; "Mars Clint was flustered hisself. Hi! who dat at de door?"

"It is I," said Mr. Clinton. "Go to bed. I am going to walk about here and smoke. I know that the laughter was—"

"What, Mars Clint?" said the two breathlessly.

"Some acoustic phenomenon, at present inexplicable. Go to bed, I say!"

As the obedient negroes ascended to their dormitory, awe-stricken, Memnon whispered:

"Goose-sticks flommery! O Vaginny! No sich varmints in ole Vaginny!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Morning Calls.

A week after the events last recorded, Mr. Clinton appeared at Rose Cottage. He had driven down in a handsome pony-phaeton, glistening in newness. The week had been a busy one with him, and Beechwood showed the power of money well expended in its rapid transformations. All the habitable part of the house had been renovated and furnished, the stables were brought into use and occupation, and Mr. Clinton's turnout was thoroughly discussed in Gloucester

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and on all the roads between Gloucester and Merton. Cards had been left at Beechwood by sundry county dignitaries. Squire Merton had ridden over, making a formal call, and engaging the American to a dinner in the next week. Mr. Grippe had stopped, and expressed the hope of seeing Mr. Clinton at his annual dinner, now nearly due. In addition to the credit from Corfu, Mr. Clinton had transferred a considerable sum from London to Browler Brothers' bank, and somehow the county magnates had found this out. The servants flitting about the house and grounds were visible from the road, and the ghosts had no chance to disport themselves in so thickly populated a locality. Mr. Podd had trimmed and transplanted, occupying several days, looking askance at Agamemnon (who seemed to be major-domo of the establishment), and cursing his own stupidity, not loudly but deeply, for running himself out of breath from so poor a counterfeit of Satan as the harmless African.

Mrs. Wailes received her visitor very cordially.

"I come to ask a great favor of you, Madam," he said. "Will you honor me by dining at Beechwood to-morrow?"

"I must ask my son," she answered, with a little hesitation, "or, as it is always best to tell the exact truth, I must say that I shrink from revisiting Beechwood."

"Yes, Madam," replied Clinton, "I expected some such answer, and therefore I came to prefer my request in person instead of sending a note. I have invited your son, who refers me to you. Ah, Madam! how happy are you both; you in your son, he in his mother. I venture to press this invitation, however, hoping you will hear my reasons."

"Certainly, Mr. Clinton. It may be that my reluctance is not wise. I should be proof against painful souvenirs at my age."

"It is because of your former acquaintance with Beechwood that I am the more urgent, Madam."

"Well," said Mrs. Wailes, "if Trump does not object."

"He bade me say it would give him pleasure, Madam, if the visit would be pleasant to you."

"It is only for a few hours," replied Mrs. Wailes, smiling, "and I think I may accept—"

"Pardon me, Mrs. Wailes," said Clinton earnestly, "but it is more than a few hours. I hope you will pass the night there. Forgive me if I am transgressing, and hear me out. I have seen sights and heard sounds at Beechwood that I cannot account for. I have weighty reasons impelling me to unravel the mystery."

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"What have you seen?"

"I have seen the form of a woman moving through the grounds, and — disappearing unaccountably."

"What have you heard?"

"I have heard laughter, distinctly, positively! It was in the chamber where I sat, in the air outside, apparently floating around me — everywhere!"

"And were you frightened or awed?"

"Neither," answered Clinton, slowly. "I can hardly tell you my emotions. I am perplexed — that is all."

"And what do you wish me to do?"

"Dine at Beechwood to-morrow — say at seven o'clock. Then I will dismiss the servants — say at eleven — and you and Wailes shall retire. But before midnight you will rejoin me in my room, and we three will watch."

"It is a pleasant prospect!" said Mrs. Wailes, shivering.

"I am ashamed of myself for proposing it, and withdraw the request," said Clinton. "Let us say no more about it. I think I can ferret it out in time. And, Mrs. Wailes," he continued cheerfully, "I will not press the dinner invitation either. It was only a sentiment after all."

"A sentiment?"

"Yes, Ma'am. You have been so kind to me that I said to myself, Mrs. Wailes shall have the first entertainment that Beechwood offers. I had some foolish idea or notion that it would be lucky to have you first." There was a little tremor in his voice as he said this. "You see, I have led so independent a life, that I have made me no friendships; and I thought in my selfishness that you and Wailes might somehow come to take the places of those who died before I knew them. It is horribly ill-bred to annoy you thus, for I see you *are* annoyed. I am truly sorry."

"I will come," said Mrs. Wailes, composedly; "and I will take breakfast with you, the next morning. There."

"And you will allow me to send for you, will you not?"

"Yes. I have no carriage. My visits are usually made within walking distances."

"Good people like you get to heaven by acts of this sort, Madam. Pure charity, pure beneficence, with self-denial."

"Poor boy!" said Mrs. Wailes. "Heaven is not obtained in that way. I shall preach to you while we wait to-morrow night."

"And I shall listen devoutly, and I promise to believe all your preaching. This is more than I have ever done before."

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"Where are you going?" said Mrs. Wailes, as Clinton rose.

"To Merton Park. I owe a visit to the good Squire."

"You are unfortunate. Mr. Radcliffe, the young squire, went to London this morning. You will miss him."

"Indeed!" replied Clinton, as he descended the steps of the porch. "That is a misfortune! But your candor is contagious, Mrs. Wailes; and I will tell you the exact truth. I saw the young squire depart by the train, and I decided to take advantage of his absence and make my visit."

"Then you do not wish to meet him?"

"Not at present. Hereafter I hope to have that pleasure. I am not quite ready. Good morning, Madam."

As the ponies trotted briskly up the lane, Mr. Clinton soliloquised.

"Yonder cottage is the Castle of Truth. I did not need tell Mrs. Wailes that I avoided this Merton. She will fancy that I am courting Miss Sybil! Why not!

"How promptly Mrs. Wailes detected my antipathy! If she does not repel my confidence, I shall tell her about it. And she will tell Trump; and Trump will put me through a catechism! He remembers our German life.

"No matter. I shall tell her anyhow. She is a dear old lady. I can tell her the story without mentioning names. Perhaps she will not suspect the true actors.

"Time enough to meet the exigency when it comes."

And with this juvenile conclusion he entered the grounds of Merton Park.

The Squire and Miss Merton had driven into the village. Miss Sybil was at home. She appeared immediately. Thought the ponies were lovely. Were they quite manageable? Would be delighted to get her hat and drive into the village to meet her father and sister, if Mr. Clinton would return with them to luncheon. Papa was speaking of him this morning, and would be glad to see him. Might she drive? Radcliffe had gone to London. Would be absent two weeks. How unlucky! Aunt Merton had sent for him. What a beautiful phaeton!

While all this monologue progressed, Clinton was making up his mind. He had seen Miss Sybil once or twice, and found that he admired her more and more. He had heard that she was destined for Radcliffe, and he longed to disappoint him. He was horror-stricken at the thought of wasting such sweetness upon the arid desert of his selfishness. Decidedly, he would use all his efforts to supplant young

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Merton, and he would allow himself to fall in love with this gentle lady on the spot.

"You drive so well, Miss Merton," he said, "that I am tempted to ask a great favor of you. I am training the ponies. May I come down here occasionally and get your aid?"

"Oh, you are making fun of me!"

"Far from it! I am entirely serious. You handle the ribbons so much better than I do, that I am gaining knowledge of the art while I watch you. I am a horseman, tolerably expert, but I have not driven a dozen times in all my life."

This was said so simply that his companion was satisfied that he was sincere.

"I must ask Papa," she answered, blushing slightly.

"I will ask him this very day, unless you forbid me. You do not answer. Allow me, once for all, to explain matters. You know I am an American, and it is quite probable that I continually transgress some English rules of propriety. But believe me, I am most eager to avoid offence, and you will do me a genuine kindness if you will give me a hint when I blunder into wrong expressions or actions."

"I am sure you are making fun now, Mr. Clinton," replied Sybil. "I have never known you to transgress any rules. You have some peculiarities of speech—"

"Pray criticise them, now and always," he said eagerly. "You don't mean that I have a nasal twang?"

"No. What is the name of your native State?"

"New York."

"Ah, that is a city. I mean the province or State, or whatever you call it."

"New York State is about as large as England. New York city is not so large as London."

"Indeed! I thought you were from another State."

"You mean Virginia?"

"Yes. Well, you call it 'Phaginny.'"

"Do I?" said Clinton, astonished.

"Certainly you do. Phaginny! Now take that for your first lesson, and learn to say 'Virginia.' I will give you some other words hereafter. There is the carriage coming. Papa does not see anything but your horses."

When the vehicles met in the road, the Squire descended from his carriage, and with a nod to Clinton, proceeded to investigate the ponies. He opened their mouths and scrutinised their teeth with

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great care. Their dental endowments being found in order, he took up their feet, where he found cause of complaint.

"That brute of a smith has pared down their hoofs," he said. "You must go down to the village and have them shod next time, Clinton. They had beautiful colts' feet — beautiful — both babies. How do they drive?"

"You must ask Miss Sybil, sir," answered Clinton; "she is instructing me in the art."

"Don't you know how to drive? Here, Baby, change places with me. I will give Mr. Clinton a lesson."

It is certain that Mr. Clinton very strongly objected to this change of instructors, but the Squire's tones were imperative. While he tried to think of the best form of expostulation, Mr. Merton whisked his daughter out of the phaeton and escorted her politely to his vacated seat in the family coach. She saw her pupil's disconcerted expression, and out of pure charity she threw him a smile and a consolatory word.

"Never mind, Mr. Clinton, we will 'resume our studies,' as Madame Finish used to say, some other time."

"Many thanks. I shall not heed the Squire's instructions, unless they accord with yours. Will you get in, sir?"

"Yes. Move over, please. I must have your seat. What do you call the off filly?"

"Phaginny," said Clinton. Sybil held up a warning finger.

"And the other?"

"Baby." He glanced furtively at Sybil, and added, "She is a pet, sir."

"All right. She should be on the off side, though. We will change them when we get home. Now drive on, John. We will just drive to the brook, girls, and overtake you before you get home. G'long!"

When Mr. Clinton drove back to Beechwood that glowing afternoon, he had the enjoyment of recalling several odd bits of pleasant chat with Sybil, at luncheon, alternating this mental exercise with perplexed cogitations upon a parting remark of Miss Merton, who startled him by saying that he "strongly resembled the Patriarch Jacob" — and contrary to her usual habit, she refused to enumerate the points of resemblance.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

DORA'S GHOST.

The dinner at Beechwood was positively charming. This was the judgment of Mrs. Wailes. There was not much attempt at display, and not a confusing succession of dishes, but the cooking was superb. The waiter, clad in spotless linen, with ebon visage, was prompt to anticipate each want of the guests, moving about the dining hall with the tread of a fairy. It was unanimously decided that tea should be served under the double beeches; and while Memnon deftly served them, Mrs. Wailes watched him with great curiosity.

"This entertainment reminds me of some of the Arabian Nights' stories," she said, when Memnon had made his final bow. "Where did you get your African, Mr. Clinton?"

"By inheritance, Madam."

Mrs. Wailes started. Trumpley explained. "Agamemnon *was* a slave, mother. But he is free now, of course."

"Have you any others, Mr. Clinton?" said Mrs. Wailes.

"Only my cook, Ma'am. She is Memnon's wife. As for the slavery, I have belonged to them from infancy. They call me 'Master Clint,' but it is a hollow mockery."

"Will you pardon my curiosity if I ask for an explanation of your words? You know we are accustomed to regard slavery as the last relic of barbarism."

"Yes. It is abolished now in my country also. I shall not discuss the question of its evils or advantages. I believe you only desire to hear my individual experience?"

"That is all. But do not tell us if the subject is at all disagreeable to yourself."

"On the contrary," said Clinton, "I am very glad to find you interested enough to listen. I lost my mother so soon after my birth that I don't remember her. My first recollection of motherly care and protection is connected with Phillis. But you have not seen Phillis?"

"No."

Clinton took a whistle from his pocket and sounded two notes. Phillis appeared in a minute. She quietly approached them and waited.

"Phillis," said Clinton, "Mrs. Wailes says your bread was inimitable."

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"Yes, Mars Clint. Dat is because de yeast ain't like Vaginny yeast. Can't make good bread wid dis yeast."

"But she says it was good."

"Does she?" answered Phillis, delighted. "Come agin next week, Missus. I done got some hops now, and will hab ra'al yeast nex week."

"I confirm the invitation very cordially," said Clinton. "Phillis, how old was I when you took charge of me?"

"Why, you was jist borned, Mars Clint. I nussed you when your mammy died. Don't you remember?"

"Well, I cannot say that I do, Phillis. But I do remember that you have taken care of me all my life."

"'Cept when you was over yonder, larnin' Dutch," said Phillis, viciously. "Don't see no good in it, nohow. Next time you go, I'm gwine wid you."

"Very well, Phillis."

"What you whistle for, Mars Clint?"

"Oh nothing! I wished Mrs. Wailes to see my cook. I told her you and Memnon used to belong to me, but that you were free now."

"Me and Memnon belonged to old missus, and she done gone to heaben. Don't see how you gwine to sot us free widout axing her."

"The law, Phillis, the law."

"Got nuffin to do wid de law. You can't sot us free if we don't want to be free."

"What will you do when I die, Phillis?" said Clinton.

"You is younger dan us. We'll die fust," and Phillis waddled back to the house in disgust.

"I told Agamemnon that he was free," said Mr. Clinton, "when I went back to America, a year or two ago. I also announced my intention of returning to England, and gave him a week to decide what he would do. He answered on the instant, 'Done decided, sar! Whar you go, I'se agwine.' So I brought him and his wife with me. He knows, of course, that he is entirely free, but the rascal also knows that I am not. He is a most valuable servant, but I should be obliged to keep him if he were worthless. It is certain that both of these ex-slaves resent any allusion to their new freedom as a personal affront. It is probable that this feeling is partly due to the fact that very few free negroes were in our neighborhood in the old time, and they were shiftless and improvident. And they doubtless have some vague idea that they inherited *me* and my protection. I am

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sure that I have no friends on earth who love me so tenderly as these."

"It seems that your servants are an exception to the rule. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which I read with great interest, presents a different picture."

Clinton laughed. "If you have no more trustworthy historian you will never learn the truth about the abolished institution from Mrs. Stowe. Baron Munchausen is veracious in comparison with her."

"You are prejudiced, of course."

"Perhaps. It will avail nothing to discuss the question. I am very glad, personally, to be delivered from the responsibility of ownership. The pecuniary loss to me is imaginary. I should never have sold Memnon or his wife, if I had been starving, and the expense of keeping them is not changed. I allow them liberal wages, and pay them regularly, but they are improvident and reckless, and accumulate nothing. Memnon has two watches, which get wound about once a month, and also an expensive violincello."

"Does he play?" said Trumpley.

"Not a note. I gave him a banjo many years ago, and tried diligently to teach him to play. All in vain; he has no music in his soul. Wailes, will your kind mother allow you to smoke? I have some Lynchburg tobacco and half-a-bushel of pipes."

"Certainly," answered Mrs. Wailes. "You can bring your pipes out here and talk while you smoke. Trump used to smoke in Germany, but has relinquished the habit, I believe."

"What induced you to give up smoking?" asked Clinton, as they approached the house.

"Economy was the principal motive," replied Wailes, promptly. "My income has never been very extensive, and I concluded to cut off unnecessary expenditure a year or so ago."

"But you can smoke so cheaply."

"Not very. Are you going upstairs?"

"Yes. I want you to see my room. Here are the pipes, and here is the tobacco. Now listen. This tobacco cost me one dollar a pound — say four shillings. These pipes — unglazed clay, with common cane-stems that cost nothing, cost two shillings a dozen. If you like the tobacco upon trial, I will sell you a pound and a dozen pipes, and you will have six months' moderate smoking at a shilling a month."

"You are a thorough good fellow, Clinton, and I will accept your offer, with thanks. But when this pound is gone —"

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"My dear fellow, I have twenty pounds in this box, and a supply besides among my stores. And I can get any quantity you want at any time. But let us go out and try it. We must get to leeward of your mother. You will understand, of course, that you have to pay me the six shillings! I would like to present you with a few pounds, only I fear the burden of obligation would break your back."

"Do *you* like obligations?" said Wailes, quietly.

"Ha! I have not thought of it. Among friends the interchange of gifts should be easy enough. If I knew you better, or rather if you knew me better, I think I could accept favors from *you*. I know I could take any gift from your mother. How good she is to let us smoke!"

They met Mrs. Wailes at the door. The night was growing cooler, and she proposed a *séance* in Mr. Clinton's smoking-room. There had been some changes made since the reader saw this apartment last. The bed was banished to an adjoining room, and the walls of the smoking-room were ornamented with pictures, ancient weapons, foils and masks, and some outlandish curiosities which Clinton had gathered up in vagrant fashion in his wanderings. On the table, in the centre of the room, the long Toledo reposed, between a pair of revolvers. There were two comfortable lounges, and the great chair with reclining back. This was drawn to one of the windows, and Mrs. Wailes, protesting that she enjoyed the fumigation, bade the young men light their pipes.

"What does this warlike array mean, Mr. Clinton?" said Mrs. Wailes, when they were all seated.

"I forgot the weapons, Madam, or I should have hidden them before you came. When I took possession of Beechwood, I thought there might be some substantial intruders, and therefore arranged my defences."

"And you have not needed them, of course?"

"No, Ma'am."

"But you have seen and heard some unsubstantial intruders, I suppose?".

Clinton silently smoked, while she waited for his reply.

"You do not answer me," she said at last.

"Excuse me, Madam," said he; "I was trying to think what answer would be proper, and I cannot decide."

Trumpley and his mother looked at him with amazement.

"If you are as thoroughly skeptical as all other sensible people," said Clinton, "perhaps you will not mind watching with me an hour

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or two. I think it quite probable that you will be able to appreciate my inability to answer your question."

"What have you seen or heard?" asked Mrs. Wailes.

"Nothing very terrible. Let us wait. It is half-past eleven o'clock; a half-hour will reveal either sights or sounds, perhaps. And I will be happy to spend the time in listening to your promised sermon."

"Instead of my sermon, I have an extract from — a book — not yet published. I thought of your Beechwood stories this morning, and I copied the passage. Shall I read it?"

"If you please, Ma'am," said Clinton, placing the candles on a table near the window. "Is the light sufficient?"

"Quite," answered Mrs. Wailes. She took a roll of paper from her pocket and began to read:

"There is something in humanity that sympathises with the supernatural; and probably this attribute, if I may so call it, is specially variable in individual cases, and specially invariable in some of its manifestations. The variation is in the degree of credulity. The similarity is in the total disregard of probabilities, where the credence is once yielded. Thus, a ghost with three heads is as readily believed in as a ghost with one. Some of the most monstrous delusions I have met with have been in this direction. I know a gentleman of undoubted scholarship, entirely sane upon all other topics, a man of high scientific attainments, who subjects all natural phenomena to the most rigid scrutiny, skeptical upon many matters of common belief, yet a firm believer in the ghost of a calf with six legs. He has seen it repeatedly, without the slightest trepidation, he avers; and he actually has some family legend that accords with his monstrous experience. I have bestowed great labor upon the examination of this case, and am compelled to yield entire credence to his story, while I utterly disbelieve his facts. It may be that time will reveal the secret of his delusion and dispel the hallucination. But at present the matter is inscrutable.

"And it is just to notice another point. While the deniers of inexplicable visitations complacently put the burden of proof upon the ghost-seers, and boldly avow the doctrine that optical delusion, warped imaginations, unsoundness in body or mind, may be safely predicated in all such supposed visitations, it is certainly true that the *testimony*, in so far as testimony has value, is all on the other side. You demonstrate no proposition when you assert that you have never seen, or that a thousand other men have never seen, the sights that have stricken terror into the hearts of two or three witnesses."

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"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Mrs. Wailes had laid a sheet of her manuscript on the table, and was smoothing out a second sheet, when the laugh floated into the apartment. At the same moment the hall-clock, after a premonitory growl, struck twelve.

"Proceed, Madam," said Clinton, coolly; "we are much interested."

"Did you hear that laugh?" said Mrs. Wailes.

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Have you heard it before?"

"Oh yes. Several times. You will hear it again, presently."

"If you have no objection, pray tell me your experience."

"There is but little to tell. On the first night — that is after I left Rose Cottage ten days ago — I heard this same sound. I was sitting where you sit now, and it seemed to come in at the window, and through the opposite hall at the same time. I have heard it every night since."

"It comes from the conservatory," said Mrs. Wailes decidedly. "I remember this room, and remember many pleasant hours spent in it; and like the whispering galleries we read of, there is a distinct echo here of sounds made in the conservatory. I have tested it many times. I think there are some leaden pipes connecting the rooms."

Clinton listened with absorbed attention. "We will investigate this to-morrow," he said.

"I feel entirely satisfied," continued Mrs. Wailes, "that all mystery connected with the transmission of the sounds will be dissipated —"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us go to the conservatory now," said Trumpley. "How can you sit there so coolly, waiting for to-morrow! Come, mother!"

"Not I! You young gentlemen can go if you please. What is that?"

She pointed eagerly out upon the darkened lawn, and the two youths sprang to the balcony. A tall figure in dark attire moved from the double beeches, just visible in the dim light of the stars.

"Not Phillis, certainly," whispered Mrs. Wailes. "Do you see the white hair?"

The apparition glided over the ground, slowly. It reached the conservatory wall, and while they looked, it disappeared. Clinton caught up a candle, and followed by Trumpley, rushed rapidly through the corridor, down the staircase, and into the conservatory. There was only one door leading from the house, and that was in the great drawing-room. The conservatory was empty. No possible hiding

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place was left unexplored. A tall lemon-tree in a box near the south wall was swaying to and fro as if moved by a gentle breeze. When they returned to Clinton's room, Mrs. Wailes informed them that the figure reappeared just as they started away, and it seemed to move round the south wing.

"Did you notice the cadence in the laughter?" said Mrs. Wailes.

"Yes. It is always the same."

"Well, it is the chorus of a song I have heard here a hundred times. I never admired it particularly — but she sang it constantly."

"She? Who?" said her listeners, in a breath.

"Dora Lennox! And if that white hair had been golden, I should have said that Dora Lennox moved out there on the lawn."

CHAPTER XXV.

MEMNON'S MEMORIES.

Mr. Podd was busy in the conservatory on the following morning, after Mr. Clinton and his guests had left Beechwood. Trumpley walked to Gloucester, and Clinton drove his ponies, dropping Mrs. Wailes at Rose Cottage, and proceeding to Merton Park for another lesson. The gardener was very much interested in the collection of plants, and his present business was merely to take as many cuttings as he could get away unseen, of such as were specially rare. Like a wise man and philosopher, as he was, Mr. Podd walked quietly round the spacious room, making his selections, intending to do the "conveying" just before he left for his noon meal. His ostensible work was all outside of the walls, and he had only slipped into the conservatory when Clinton drove away, because he could not resist the opportunity and the open door. Mr. Clinton and Mrs. Wailes came out through the conservatory, and entered the phaeton there, leaving the door ajar.

The liberal politics of Mr. Podd had an expansive platform of principles; and one cardinal doctrine of his creed pronounced all ownership of any valuable, robbery of the worker. His efforts to carry this principle into practice were somewhat obstructed by the operation of effete laws and customs which met him at every turn, such as penalties attached to trespass, and the nefarious habit of

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locking up places and things by the robbers who owned them. But having the conservatory to himself, he was not disturbed by such contemptible considerations, and was, for the nonce, monarch of all he surveyed.

This part of his rightful dominions Mr. Podd had secretly longed to explore since he began his labors among the flower-beds on the lawn. But the door was always locked; and with the modesty that ever accompanies greatness, Mr. Podd had refrained from trying to get into the conservatory through the house, lest he should stumble against some abominable 'ristocratic rule that excluded gentlemen of his class from drawing-rooms. He could probably have overcome his repugnance to break the abstract rule, but he was not at all certain that some miserable slave of a footman would not encounter him in the passage, and enforce the rule with violence and contumely.

Filled with these reflections, and calculating the probabilities of getting slips to take root and grow, and fixing in his mind the prices he would demand, the names he would give to the plants, and the very patrons who should buy them, the liberal philosopher made a mental list of such plants as he would appropriate on this occasion. A geranium on a high shelf attracted his attention particularly, both by its wealth of bloom and odor, and stepping lightly on the frame below, he plucked a twig of it for closer observation.

"Musn't tech nuffin!" said a husky voice behind him, and Mr. Podd, turning with easy grace of manner, though with perturbed spirits, beheld Agamemnon, squatting on an inverted flower-pot and half concealed behind a gigantic cactus.

"Musn't tech nuffin in dis room!" said the African, rising and approaching the gardener. "Mars Clint gib strick orders. He says dese flowers are not his'n."

"Oh! Ah!" said the philosopher. "And who may you be?"

"Agamemnon Jehoshaphat Washington Blox!" answered the other, composedly.

"And do you belong to the house?" said Mr. Podd, somewhat awed by the *pronomina* of his interlocutor.

"No, sar! I belong to Mars Clint. Gib me de flower you done broke off. Mebbe it will grow agin. Mebbe you'd better git out now; Mars Clint would play de debble wid you if he cotch you in here."

So saying, Mr. Blox took the poor fragment of geranium, and spitting on the fractured stem, he stuck it carefully in the earth by the root of a lemon-tree that stood near in its box. Mr. Podd accepted

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the invitation to walk out, and Memnon following him, pulled the door after him, which closed with a snap. There was no knob on the outside.

The gardener returned to his recognised occupation, trimming a hedge of boxwood surrounding a flower-bed on the lawn. Memnon stretched himself lazily in the sun near him, and watched his proceedings. Mr. Podd felt an antagonistic spirit reviving within his bosom, partly because the African had caught him in the act of stealing, and partly because he assumed a delegated authority over him, as the representative of the blarsted 'ristocrat who paid him his wages.

"If them flowers don't belong to Clinton, whose are they?" he asked, sullenly.

"Who do you mean by Clinton? Gempleman like Mars Clint gen'ally hab handle to his name."

"He calls me Podd," answered the gardener. "Why should I not call him Clinton?"

"Podd werry good name for you. Him call me Memnon too. But when you wisits me, you must ax for Mr. Blox. When I returns your wisit, I'll ax for Mr. Podd."

"And when I visit him I'll call him Mr. Clinton," said Podd, sarcastically.

"Better do it when you ax for your wages too," said Memnon. "I 'spec you needn't mind wisitin' him. Mebbe he wouldn't be at home. But I'm home all de time."

Podd gazed at the innocent black face, and wondered if his companion was making game of him. Memnon bore the scrutiny with undisturbed gravity.

"Who owns the flowers in the glass-house?" said Podd, after a pause.

"De ghosses, I s'pose," replied Memnon.

The gardener snipped the leaves from the boxwood while he meditated. Analysing his colloquy, he could not find any part of it that was satisfactory. While he entertained a profound contempt for the negro, who lay blinking on the grass, there was an uncomfortable conviction on his mind that Memnon had rather the better of him. The reference to ghosts was peculiarly offensive, because the philosopher had recently been frightened out of his philosophy by a couple of black apparitions, one of whom, he concluded, was broiling himself in the sun within reach of his arm. There was an element of cruelty in the character of the man that fell naturally into the

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grooves of his communistical theories, and he cast furtive glances, full of malignity, upon the comfortable African, who seemed more than half asleep.

"There's two of you niggers here?" said Mr. Podd.

"Two culled pussons. You nebber seen a nigger, 'cept you seen de debble!" This was said with severe dignity.

"What?" said Podd, harshly.

"I say you nebber seen a nigger, 'cept you've bin in torment! 'Spec you're gwine dar—den you'll see him, sho' nuff!"

This was satisfactory, and looked like progress. Memnon was evidently insulted, and Podd felt better. Moreover, it opened the way for argumentation upon radical topics, and this was always pleasant and profitable.

"I meant no offence," he said apologetically. "My notion is that all men are equal. I don't know any difference between white and black, rich and poor, lords and laborers. Some men own land and houses and hosses and cows, but they haven't any right to 'em. No man has any right to anything he don't work for."

"Den why don't you take dis house, and let Mars Clint trim your flowers?" said Memnon, raising himself upon his elbow.

"Because the 'ristocrats that rule this country have made laws against the workingman. I've as good a right to this house as Mr. Clinton."

"Mars Clint pay de rent. S'pose he pay de rent for one year? Is you got right to turn him out befo' de year is done gone?"

"He had no right to pay the rent. He had the right to take the house if he wanted it, without rent. Rent is robbery. There is no rent in heaven, if there is such a place."

"I reckon not," answered Memnon. "Don't pay rent up dar! Is you gwine dar?"

"Don't believe in no such place," said Podd.

"I reckon not," said Memnon again. "Now I'll tell you how 'tis. Men ain't all ekal. Dares three kinds. Fust, de gemplemans, like Mars Clint and Mr. Wailes. Den de culled pussons dat behave demselves. Den de po' white trash. Sometimes gemplemans git drunk and cut up all kinds o' tricks, but, mind you, dey still gemplemans. Culled pussons git drunk sometimes, and dey jist play de fool, and if dey don't git licked — all de better. But when po' white trash git drunk — den —"

"What?" said Podd, as the orator paused.

"Why den he jist same as a hog rootin' in de ground! Him

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tol'able good pison when he sober, but when he drunk he's all de same as a hog! Only he ain't good to eat. Yah!"

The concluding interjection was so expressive, so full of disgust and contempt, that Podd was stunned. The oration proceeded.

"It ain't de money, mind you. When Mars Clint was little infant, his mammy died, and my wife nussed him and fotch him up. He didn't had no money hardly. Some was lef' to him to pay for him to go ober yonder to larn Dutch. But he was jist de same gempleman. Me and Phillis kep' de farm goin'. Mars Clint hab uncle in New York, but he nebber disturb us. Befo' he done larnin' Dutch de war come, an' we kep' on plantin' corn and sellin' a little, and raisin' hog meat. Wen Mars Clint come'd home, war was done over, an' he tell me and Phillis dat we was free feller-citizens. Plenty people done told us same thing. Den his uncle died and leave all his money to Mars Clint. Den he tole me and Phillis he was gwine to come to dis mis'able country, whar de corn won't grow; and he tole us we was free, and he gib us de ole farm, and de hog-meat and corn and mules. Hosses all done stole in de war."

Another rhetorical pause. The gardener was greatly interested, but wisely waited for Memnon to resume his discourse. The negro preserved his calm exterior, but was evidently excited by the old memories he was recalling.

"Befo' uncle died, mind you, Mars Clint was done busted. Jist de same as a punkin when mule kick it wid his fore-foot. De money dat paid for larnin' Dutch was all gone, an' all de hands he hab on de farm all gone too. Only me and Phillis wasn't gone. We hab hog meat and hominy — plenty of it. Mars Clint stayed home purty nigh a year, and try to farm a little. He was jist de same gempleman when he was straddlin' along behind de plow, mules goin' ebbery way — plow jumpin' out ob de furrow, and Mars Clint sprawlin' along jist same as a culled pusson dancin' a hoe-down. Rale gempleman, mind you! Den de uncle died, and Mars Clint put crape on his hat, and he tole me and Phillis dat he hab plenty of money now, and was comin' ober here, and we was free feller-citizens, and mought hab de farm."

Here Memnon raised himself up on his haunches, and squatting opposite the Radical, looked intently at him as he concluded his narrative.

"Den we up and tole him dat we raised him from de time he was borned. Dat we didn't want no farm, dat we didn't want no wotes. Ef he couldn't lib in Ole Vaginny — no more we couldn't. Dat we

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belonged to his mammy, and she was in heaben, and hadn't made nary 'mancipation papers, and we jist wanted to know whar de debble he could go dat we couldn't go too. An' my ole woman — dat's Phillis — tole me if I didn't git Mars Clint to take us, she would scald me de fust time she got hold of a gourd full of bilin' water! She'd a' done it too, mind you!

"Den de rale gempleman showed out! Mars Clint jist cried like a baby, and Phillis cried, and Mars Clint shook hands wid us, and said 'Werry well,' and we knowed it was all settled. And I 'spect I'd a cried too, only I was busy tellin' Phillis if she didn't shet up her howlin' I'd git a cowhide and gib her somethin' to cry about.

"Now if Mars Clint had bin po' white trash, you s'pose he goin' to be bothered wid us? No, sar! He'd jist a sneaked off by hisself, and tole us to go to de debble."

"I s'pose you are worth all you cost him," said Podd with a sneer. "It would cost him a pound or two a month to get others to wait on him, if you were not here."

"Dere's de po' white trash agin!" said Memnon. "Here is my wages! My mont' up to-day, and Mars Clint pay me dis mornin' befo' he go."

He held out his black hand with four shining sovereigns in the palm, glittering in the sunlight, and they seemed to Mr. Podd to be about the size of half-crown pieces. To this day he is not certain of the denomination of the coins, and as he watched Memnon's retreating form until he disappeared within the house he muttered: "Who would have thought that a blarsted nigger could be a 'ristocrat! I'm blest if he hasn't got the same swagger that his master has! And he calls hisself a 'culled pusson,' and me 'white trash'— cuss his black hide!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

Laying the Ghost.

When Mr. Clinton's phaeton re-entered the gates at Beechwood, the sun was sinking behind the western horizon. Agamemnon met him at the door, and invited him into the conservatory, where he had a discovery to relate.

"You see, Mars Clint," he began, impressively, "when you done

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druv off this mornin', I squatted down dar on dat flower-pot. I seed dat ole Podd poking about de winders afore to-day. So I conclude to watch him a lilly bit. Sho' nuff he come slinkin' in. You lef' de do' open. Den he walk round, gapin' at de flowers, and sniffen, fust one, den another. I keep my eye skun, and purty soon he climb up on de frame yonder, an' broke off a piece of geraniment. Den I riz up, and tuck it away from him, and tole him he better walk out, and I stuck de geraniment down here in dis box.

"Well, sar, I went out dar, and laid down on de grass while he work at de flower-beds. He kep' on talkin' purty nigh all de mornin'. Talked a whole heap of Fourth o' July talk. He says you don't own nuffin, widout you work for it; and if you do work for it, and any oder po' white trash want it, den you don't own it nohow."

"What is all this rubbish about, Memnon?" said Mr. Clinton, impatiently.

"Hole on! You'll see bime-by, Mars Clint. When he done talk about two hours, it make me sick at de stomach, so I went in to Phillis and got a lilly bit fat bacon. Den I come in here, and tho't I'd see how dis geraniment was gittin' along. So I kneeled down here, and leant up agin de box — dis way — and — jist look for yourself!"

As he spoke, the tree-box glided along the floor, and the wall opened behind it. Clinton saw the clump of beeches out upon the lawn, and the waving ivy around the secret door-frame. Then the African pulled the box back to its original position, and the wall closed, shutting out the view. Bidding Memnon stand aside, Clinton repeated the operation himself. The box slipped noiselessly and easily. All the machinery was hidden under the floor, and when the door was shut there was nothing to indicate such an opening. Broad battens on either side concealed the joints, and no one would have suspected the existence of this passage-way.

"Have you mentioned this to any one, Memnon?" asked his master, as they left the conservatory by way of the drawing-room.

"No, sar. Keep my mouf shet tight!"

"Have you told Phillis?"

"Phillis! Law, Mars Clint! ef Phillis know'd about dis do', and couldn't find somebody to tole about it — she would a-bust by dis time. No, sar! I jist wait till you come, and tole nobody."

"Very well, Memnon. Here! this is half-a-crown. If it is not big enough to keep your mouth shut, I'll find another."

"Sho! Mars Clint!" replied Memnon, taking the coin and

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pocketing it. "I don't want no money to keep my mouf shut. Must I nail up de do'?"

"Certainly not. Is the outer door closed?"

"Yes, sar."

"Well, I'll just lock this one, and take the key. And I will be ready to dine in half an hour."

Late in the evening Mr. Clinton drew his chair to the balcony, and smoked and meditated. He had spent several hours after dinner in reading old letters, of which he had a huge package. The reader need not apprehend their reproduction in this narrative, as the story they suggested, in fragments and hints, will be told in more coherent fashion in due time. But as readers have the power of divining the very thoughts of the shadowy people flitting across these pages, some of Mr. Clinton's musings may as well be recounted.

"It is odd that I should have been drawn so suddenly to Mrs. Wailes," he thought. "Those German dreamers would have a psychological explanation, no doubt. It was odd, by the way, that I never saw her in Germany. She was always within reach of her boy, and I might have known her easily. And now it has happened, just in the crisis, that she has cleared away all my doubts, and unravelled all my mysteries. The whole business is plain now. I did not tell her, lest I should be mistaken after all. But I cannot be mistaken. The letters, the stories I heard at Baden, and the hints from Mrs. Wailes filling all the gaps, all converge to the certain conclusion.

"How still the night is! There is not even the whirr of that elephant-bug that has been sailing in and out here for a week or more. I wonder how he employs himself by daylight?

"I must put on my moccasins. Hi! there goes the old clock."

With noiseless tread he passed through the hall, down the stairs, through the long corridor and into the drawing-room. Producing the key, he cautiously opened the conservatory door, and after listening a moment, stepped lightly down among the flowers. Some faint gleam of light came in through the roof, from the starry heavens; and when he reached the opposite wall, the lawn was dimly visible through the closely-woven network of wire that covered the windows.

A narrow space between a great cactus and the wall, and an inverted flower-pot that he found with his foot as he crept along. This was the spot he had selected by daylight, and seating himself where Memnon sat when he watched Podd, he waited.

The lemon-tree nods gently as it glides away from him. A tall figure passes near him, with black skirts trailing over the floor. Long white

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hair, floating over her shoulders, and no audible footfall. Through the screen of leaves he sees her eyes, open and devoid of expression. "Thou hast no speculation in those eyes!" thought the watcher.

Then the apparition, with low tones, gradually increasing in volume as the song progressed, began to sing:

"Sing, oh sing!
To her who weareth the golden wing,
Sing, sing, sing!
And who may this fair maiden be?
Joy! Joy!
The mother of mirth and glee!
And time shall be
Like an evergreen tree,
While we both sing so merrily.
Then laugh, oh laugh and sing,
Then laugh, ha! ha!
Then laugh, ha! ha!
Then laugh, oh laugh and sing,
Sing tira la, la, la, la, la,
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

The last line was given with considerable vigor, and the ghost abruptly retraced its steps and disappeared behind the lemon-tree. Looking through the window, Clinton saw it approaching the rustic seat under the beeches.

It was not strictly according to ghostly etiquette, yet the figure sat down under the trees, still murmuring the chorus of the song, while she combed her long tresses with slender fingers. As Clinton decided to go out upon the lawn, the figure suddenly rose, and flitted away to more remote coverts of the broad enclosure, visible only now and again, as her white hair appeared through openings in the bushes.

"I must wait here," he thought. "If I go out now I may lose her. She will return without doubt."

And gliding along the hedge, then to the double-trees, and then to the conservatory, the ghost came. He slunk back against the wall as she passed him again, going to the farther end of the conservatory. She stood here, and again began her song. She had a marvellously sweet voice for a ghost, who by rights should indulge only in sepulchral accents. As she concluded with the refrain, she waved her hand, as if dismissing her attendants or visitors, and came sailing down towards the lemon-tree. But Mr. Clinton, pressing the box back with his foot, stood suddenly before the apparition, holding out his hands.

She moved nearer, looking at him with vacant eyes, and would

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have passed, but he threw his arm around her waist and held her back.

"Awake!" he said, sharply.

She shuddered, and endeavored to extricate herself.

"Awake!" he repeated.

"What is it? Where am I? How dare you!"

"Ah! You are awake! Do not be alarmed. You have been sleep-walking—that is all. You are in the conservatory. See! here is the lemon-tree. Now I open the door—now I close it. Do you see?"

"Yes! Allow me to go out;" she spoke with cold composure.

"Out! Go out! Nevermore!" he answered, tenderly.

"What do you mean, Sir?"

"I mean you to come with me, here through the drawing-room."

"Who are you?" said the ghost tremulously.

"I? Do you not know? I was sure you would know me when I wakened you."

"I do not know you!"

"I am De Witt Stratton. Come away!"

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Book XXX.

THE BANK'S GAME.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Gossip.

Browler Brothers had been a respectable firm a century or more. The Browlers were Gloucester people, living in the city, and always preserving an air of comfortable solidity. Fifty years ago, Mr. Adam Browler, a bachelor of sixty, and his nephew, Mr. Adam Browler, Jr. (a married man with half-a-dozen daughters), composed the firm. Anthony Grippe was errand-boy, the type of Chunk; and by regular gradations worked his way first to the counter and then to a desk. Adam Senior had fits of asthma. So had Grippe. Adam Senior was methodical and exact. So was Grippe. Adam Junior liked to take a sly risk on the Derby. Grippe had a spasm whenever any sort of risk was suggested. Adam Junior played a good game of ecarté, and won twenty pounds one night from Captain Twizzle of the Gloucester Fencibles. Grippe paid Captain Twizzle's cheque for the amount the next morning, and while Adam Junior chuckled and rattled the sovereigns in his pocket, Grippe rolled up his eyes in horror.

And so it came to pass that Grippe got a higher step in the bank, and a lower desk. That is, he was promoted from the stool to the arm-chair. Adam Senior gradually put weighty interests in his charge, and after signing "Browler Brothers" by procuration a year or two, Mr. Grippe became a regular junior in the firm.

Twenty years of steady application had made the young partner master of all the details of his business. And while he was on the

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best terms with Adam Junior, in spite of the latter's erratic habits, he was the mainstay of the bank in the estimation of Browler Senior.

Some complications in accounts between the bank and their correspondent in Marseilles made a trip to the continent necessary. Adam Junior thought he would take a daughter or two, run over to Paris, then down to Marseilles, and "fix matters." The girls wanted the jaunt, poor things. So he went, with the understanding that he would remain in Paris until the accounts were forwarded from Gloucester. A day later, Adam Senior despatched Mr. Grippe with the accounts in his pocket, and with instructions to find the Marseilles people and settle.

This was the turning-point in Mr. Grippe's fortunes. He was absent a month, but when he returned he had the full settlement of the Marseilles account. He had followed his debtor to Baden, and after various vexatious delays, obtained the money. A year later, he bought Adam Junior's interest in the bank. Everything seemed to prosper with him. And before Adam Senior departed this life, Mr. Grippe had also bought his interest, although the old gentleman was retained as a sort of Professor Emeritus of Banking, and actually went off finally in the bank parlor, in a fit of apoplexy. Mr. Grippe went into mourning; the bank shutters were put up on the day of the funeral, and Mr. Grippe was chief mourner, as Adam Junior was on the continent.

Halidon had passed into Mr. Grippe's possession very soon after his return from Baden. His partners supposed he had made the purchase in behalf of some client, as no one thought him possessed of such substantial wealth as the ownership of Halidon would presuppose. Mr. Grippe rather encouraged this view of matters, as he habitually referred to his proprietorship as temporary. But the years rolled on, and there was no transfer of title, and the surrounding world gradually accepted the banker as one of the lords of the soil. Once in each year he gave a dinner, and each recurrence of this event showed an improvement upon former entertainments. The guests were selected with great skill, and everybody met precisely the most congenial company in the neighborhood. No expense was spared at these annual feasts; and as Mr. Grippe lived very frugally three hundred and sixty-four days after each entertainment, it is very probable that his yearly income was not materially impaired. There was more or less solemnity about these parties, which was due to their rare recurrence, and the want of real intimacy betwixt host and guests.

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It would not be possible for any single gentleman in England or any other civilised country to live as Mr. Grippe lived, without exciting the compassion of some unmarried ladies. His solitary life weighed down the spirits of twenty maidens and widows within five miles of Halidon. He needed constant nursing with his perpetual asthma; he required female society to cheer him in his stately home; artful minxes might catch him in some unguarded moment and marry him out of hand; the servants at Halidon were making ducks and drakes of his money, with no watchful mistress to keep them in check; having no youthful forms at play in the wide grounds, he was squandering a fortune in flowers and other adornments, which nobody saw; his life was altogether abnormal, and society was bound to regulate it. Uncles and brothers-in-law and mammas presented these and similar arguments, again and again, and Mr. Grippe coughed and choked, but made no satisfactory response. He kept steadfastly on, making money, growing richer and more asthmatic, until the date of this history, when a vague rumor spread over the neighborhood, to the effect that the Old Brute had been receiving wasted sympathy through twenty years, as he had, without warning, brought a grown-up daughter from foreign parts, to inherit all the wealth of the eminent firm of Browler Brothers.

The most aggravating part of the business was the total ignorance of the entire community as to the marriage of Mr. Grippe, and his present condition. Nobody knew whether Mrs. Grippe were still alive or no. Nobody had spoken to Heloïse, and very few had seen her. She had been at church once only, and that was on the first Sunday after her arrival, and before the news of her advent had reached everybody.. On the second Sunday Mr. Grippe was in his pew with a young lady, but she was veiled so closely that nobody could give a satisfactory description of her. She was not the "other one" however. Perhaps the wheezing old Turk had two daughters.

Then another rumor got out. Mr. Grippe had not been married at all. Indeed, Mrs. Flamingo, who had a brother in London and two single daughters in Gloucester, and whose pew was just behind Mr. Grippe's, had a letter from her brother, in which he informed her that he had met the banker at Charing Cross Hotel, and had learned from him in a lucid interval that the lady in question was his "adopted daughter." The banker was still open therefore to honorable competition. The adopted daughter — poor, motherless girl! — ought to have a woman's tender care. How would Grippe know the wiles of the wicked world? Who was the other young lady? Grippe kept

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her so close and was so silent that he was probably thinking of "adopting" a wife. It would be a pretty business for the old hunks to marry a slip of a girl like that! Nothing more likely. The slip of a girl sailed down the aisle with so majestic an air that she probably already considered herself the mistress of Halidon. She looked very quiet and demure, but as sly as a cat. Her name was Miss Cram. Nobody knew whence Grippe had picked her up. James, who knew more of Halidon than any one else, was stolid and stupid, and could or would give no information except that Miss Cram was a lady "hevery hinch of her." She had only been at Halidon a few weeks, yet she had managed to get the good-will of Mr. Grippe's confidential servant.

And there was young Wailes! Gone into trade; or at least into banking, which was the same thing. Why didn't he go into the army or something? He walked all the way from Rose Cottage to Gloucester, and back again in the afternoon, every day. He knew no end of languages, and did the foreign correspondence. But he was after something, of course. Probably Grippe's daughter. Bless you, the Waileses had next to nothing! They lived in a very plain way indeed. Oh, he had a good place in the bank, and said he got a great deal more salary than he was worth. He was an odd creature anyhow. Grippe told somebody that he was a regular treasure. But the grand mystery was, how a young gentleman with no business training whatever could take charge of the complicated affairs of so immense a concern as Browler Brothers'. Wailes was a good fellow, though, if he was odd. If his uncle had not been such a wretch, Wailés would have had Halidon. Grippe bought it for a song — ten or twelve thousand. It was worth twenty. After all, it would be a sort of poetical justice if Wailes got the daughter, and through her the inheritance. Nobody knew what Grippe was worth, but he spent nothing, and was accumulating all the time. He must have a big lot of money — immense!

This Mr. Clinton, who had taken Beechwood, was another mystery. Talking of money, *he* had enough! He tried to buy Blondel Farm, but there was some trouble about the entail; Mrs. Flamingo's brother was negotiating now. It was sixteen thousand pounds, and Clinton had the money in Grippe's bank. He and Wailes were great friends. Clinton was an American — not a Yankee; he came from South America, where they had that dreadful war. He brought two of his slaves with him — Africans; black as a coal. He was giving a dinner at Beechwood. The Mertons were invited. They said he had

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laid the ghosts at the old place, and had renovated it completely. Grippe was invited, and was going. Clinton drove down to Merton Park every day. Shouldn't wonder if he supplanted Radcliffe Merton. Family? He was altogether eligible. Sir Henry Walton had been attaché or something at Washington, and knew all about him; most respectable young man, and highly educated. Lady Walton vouched for him. He had lived abroad nearly all his life, somewhere on the Continent.

Really it was impossible to find out whether Radcliffe Merton was paying serious attentions to his cousin or not. The estate would go to him when the Squire died. It was not probable that he had much besides, as he led a gay life, and was altogether dependent upon his mother. Oh yes, he had his dog-cart and team, and he owned Rose Cottage; but the revenue from the last did not pay his groom's wages. Mrs. Merton kept him strictly to his allowance, it was said, and some ill-natured persons hinted that the young gentleman was considerably in debt. The girls would have moderate fortunes, but the Squire did not live economically, and was probably spending all his revenue; and when Mr. Radcliffe took possession, he would, no doubt, cover the broad acres with mortgages. He was very polite and agreeable, played croquet charmingly, but was thoroughly selfish. He and Wailes were fast friends formerly, but they did not appear to be so cordial of late. Wailes was a handsome fellow, and Radcliffe might perhaps be slightly jealous. The Squire was very fond of Wailes, and called him "The Odd Trump."

The foregoing is a fair sample of Gloucester gossip so far as it related to the actors in this story. Like all gossip, it had running through its warp and woof certain fine threads of truth, and this delicate network served to give vitality and coherence to the rest. It is one of the beneficent provisions of nature that makes an unadorned falsehood fall to the ground by its own gravity. It tends downward. But give a little coloring of verity, a spot here and there, and fables float upon the surface of society like the winged seeds of certain plants, finding lodgment and taking root in odd corners, and bringing forth fruit after their kind. It is another beneficent provision that lays upon humanity the task of separating between fact and fable; and certainly, the worthiest of the race, in their efforts in behalf of the race, employ their best powers precisely in this direction.

With this small fragment of philosophy, more valuable because of the rare appearance of philosophy upon these pages, the gentle reader will enter once more upon the action of the story.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Dorado Mine.

There was a letter enclosing a prospectus of a certain silver mine in Nevada, that was placed upon Mr. Wailes' desk, among the foreign letters, one morning. It did not belong to his department, but Mr. Grippe had written "H. T. W." in pencil on the margin as an indication of his desire that Wailes should write the reply. It was from the chairman of the board of directors, dated in London. After disposing of the foreign mail, Wailes took up this document, and read it carefully. The letter was merely an invitation to Browler Brothers to invest in this "desirable property," calling attention to the date of allotment of shares. A stamped envelope, bearing the address of the chairman, was pinned to the letter. The prospectus described the property, its exact location, the extent of operations already going on, and the estimated yield of ore, with some analyses of samples. The report of a mining engineer was appended, which was confusing rather by reason of the magnitude of the figures than from any other cause. Wailes took the lowest possible yield as set forth in the paper, and found that it promised fully ten per centum per annum upon the total cost of shares. After two or three perusals of these documents, Trump was slightly bewildered. Clearly, the only safe course was to get Mr. Grippe's ideas upon the subject before he ventured to answer this glowing epistle.

Taking his portfolio in his hand, he went into the banker's office. Mr. Grippe glanced at the foreign letters rapidly, and affixed his signature. At the bottom Trump had placed the mining prospectus, which Mr. Grippe took up, turned over and replaced, handing the portfolio back.

"You have not answered Mr. Tyrrell's letter, I see," said he.

"No, sir," said Wailes; "I thought I would ask you —"

"Oh, don't ask me anything about it. Find out all you can, write a proper reply, and I will sign it. No hurry. Take your time, and get what information you need. Any time to-day will do."

This was refreshing. Here was an entirely new case. The information he required was not within reach. He sat down at his desk, and methodically wrote out a list of the points upon which he needed enlightenment.

First: The honesty of the promoters of the scheme.

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Second: The trustworthiness of the statements recorded.

Third: The possibility of failure.

Fourth:—Who is that? Chunk, ushering in a gentleman. Mr. Clinton. Wailes closed his portfolio, and welcomed his visitor.

"Come out for a walk, Wailes," said the American. "You must be pretty well stewed in this hot room."

"It is luncheon time," answered Wailes; "come with me and get a chop."

"Agreed! Do you go at this hour usually? Well, to-morrow I will call for you, and we will lunch at Beechwood. I can drive my ponies there in nine minutes. I timed them yesterday."

"This is according to my doctrine—"

"What do you mean?" said Clinton.

"Why, you take my chop to-day, and return me a chop to-morrow."

"Exactly! And I will make a mental memorandum of the dimensions of your chop, so as to give you the same quantity. Where do you go?"

"In Queen street. It is not the most popular place, but they cook them delightfully, and they let you select your meat. I found the place by accident a week or two ago."

They were shown into a little stall with a red curtain over the entrance. The mutton was produced, inspected and approved; and while it was broiling Clinton took some letters from his pocket, which he looked over, apologising to Wailes as he did it.

"Hum!" said he, handing one across the table, "here is a chance to make a fortune. Just look at these flattering figures."

It was a duplicate of the mining circular. The letter was also an exact copy of the one that Wailes had left in his portfolio, the only difference being in the address. Trumpley read the letter, and returned it without comment.

"Now this Mr. Tyrrell will 'place' the whole of the stock within a week," observed Mr. Clinton; "you Englishmen are made to be sold."

"Sold?"

"Certainly! Do you know where Nevada is?"

"Of course," answered Wailes, slightly confused—"that is, I have a vague knowledge on the subject."

"Well, how nearly can you locate Nevada? Bring your vague idea to definite proportions, and tell me what it is."

"Nevada," said Wailes, "is a country somewhere near Mexico. I do not remember latitude and longitude, if I ever knew. But it is

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somewhere out West, in America — nearer the Pacific than the Atlantic."

"Very good. The description is accurate enough. What is peculiar about Nevada?"

"It is said to be rich in metals —"

"Who says so?"

"I don't remember the authorities. That circular you showed me refers to it as a well-known fact."

"Of course," said Mr. Clinton; "what else could the circular say? If you want a mine you must go to a metalliferous country. Now I never heard of the 'Dorado Mine' until this moment, and it is possible that the description here given is true."

"How much of it do you believe?" said Wailes, much interested.

"Not a solitary word," replied Clinton, coolly.

Wailes was shocked. There was something diabolical in the American's prompt and wholesale rejection of the Dorado Mine. While he mused the chops came, done to a turn. There were two roasted potatoes, two small slices of bread, two little pats of butter, and two mugs of beer.

"*Waes hael!*" said Wailes, taking his mug in hand.

"*Drinc hael!*" responded Clinton, imitating him.

"I am not certain as to the exact meaning of the words," said Trumpley; "but I have a profound veneration for everything Saxon, and I suppose this is a courteous salutation and response."

"I also venerate the Saxon," replied Clinton. "We have a common ancestry, and mine has been very largely in the Saxon line."

"On my father's side, my strain is pure Saxon," said Wailes.

"Then you would not be fooled by so shallow a fraud as the 'Dorado,'" replied the other. "Your Saxon, if of gentle blood, lacks greed, which is the first element in the character of a victim. You prefer earning to winning."

"That is true," said Wailes, thoughtfully; "yet I am eager enough to gain money to incur some risk."

"Very well. Buy a hundred shares or so of Dorado; I will lend you the money. If you have pluck enough to sell out at a moderate profit, you will be tolerably certain to get it. The difficulty is in the increase of greed. When you have a few hundreds assured profit, you want a few thousands; the devilish appetite grows by that it feeds upon."

"I am perplexed about this matter," said Trumpley. "Somehow I recoil from the adventure, yet I am anxious to make the gain if

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lawful. Of course I do not think of accepting your generous offer. I have some small capital."

"Heed your instinct, my friend," said Clinton, with impressive earnestness. "I will analyse it for you. If there is such a thing in existence as the Dorado mine—"

"Do you really doubt it?" interrupted Wailes.

"Indeed I do. But there may be such a mine, and it may be a silver mine, and it may be productive. Now, if so, do you not think there is capital enough in New York to take it up?"

"Certainly."

"Then there would be no need to seek English capital. That is the first point. And if it should prove bogus at last, after you had comfortably disposed of your shares, somebody would be sorely bitten. How would your few hundreds burn your pockets if you knew some widow or orphan had invested in the identical shares that you sold!"

"I would not touch the stock," said Wailes, with a shudder.

"This Tyrrell has been promoter of sundry questionable schemes," observed Clinton. "I should not have doubted this one so promptly but for his connection with it. He manages to get some respectable names on his prospectus, and is never caught with unprofitable shares on hand. In America he is called a shyster."

"A what?"

"A shyster. The word means a slippery fellow, a rogue, a false pretender, a sucker, a whelp."

"You have a redundant vocabulary," said Trumpley, laughing, "but all your terms are expressive. As for Dorado, I'll none of it! Will you have more chops?"

"I thank you, no."

"More beer?"

"No more; I am going to dine at Merton Park. I wish you were going also."

"Perhaps I may be there. The Squire has given me a standing invitation, courteous and hearty. I feel authorised to go at any time, and am sure of a cordial welcome. My friend," he continued, suddenly seizing Clinton's hand, "you have done me great good, and I am grateful. You have infused into my mind a horror of all speculation. Henceforth I am invulnerable, and you have furnished my armor of proof."

Clinton was touched by the other's earnestness. As they left the chop-house he took Trumpley's arm and walked to the corner.

"This is my theory, Wailes," he said, as they parted: "stealing is

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a mean business, begging is meaner, and gambling is meanest. When you steal you incur a certain risk; when you beg, your alms-giver knows what you are doing; but when you gamble, if you win, it must be by inflicting certain loss somewhere. Most men will reverse the order of offences, but I have adopted the gradation after careful study of the subject. I am truly glad if I have made you think with me. Good-bye!"

An hour later Mr. Wailes laid his answer to Mr. Tyrrell upon the banker's desk. Mr. Grippe read it, his sharp eyes twinkled a little, and he affixed his signature without comment. The letter was very short, running as follows:—

"*Dear Sir*:—We have your favor of yesterday, with enclosure, and beg to say that we decline the investment proposed.

"Very truly yours,

"BROWLER BROTHERS."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE HALIDON DINNER.

The guests gathered at Halidon on Mr. Grippe's annual day early in September. The house was formally handed over to a certain major-domo from London, who had arrived the day before with a large following of cooks and waiters. The banker's system was wise. He furnished this dignitary with a list of the company as soon as his invitations were accepted, and a statement of the condition of larder and cellar. He was expected to provide a feast, and was not limited in his outlays. Mr. Dipperly felt his responsibility. His character was at stake, and he was equal to the emergency. There were occasions upon which the honor of England was committed to his hands, when some noble lord in official position dined a foreign Excellency at his club and gave Dipperly no word of instruction except to "provide becomingly." But the caterer really dreaded the Halidon dinner far more than any London entertainment, because Mr. Grippe was emphatic in his anteprandial orders to spare no expense, and extremely irritating in his postprandial examination of "hitems," as Mr. Dipperly called his list of outlays. And each year as Dipperly returned to London (in a smoking-carriage, where

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he tried various brands of cigars that Mr. Grippe had provided for his guests), he assured himself that the ten-pound note he received from the banker hardly paid for the worry of settlements for his vicarious expenditures. "Hitems" were his abomination, and they were Mr. Grippe's delight.

Heloïse was presented to each guest as "Mademoiselle, my adopted daughter," and a brief apology offered for her lack of English; and then in the same sentence Mabel was introduced as "her friend, Miss Grahame." The girls were dressed alike, Mr. Grippe having astounded Mabel on the same morning by presenting her dress with a rapid enumeration of his reasons for wishing them similarly attired, and beating back a torrent of objections by falling suddenly into a fit of asthma that threatened his life. Mabel fluttered around him, horrified at his evident agony, and strangled with the fumes of stramonium, until he gasped out, "My dear, if you don't wish me to die, run away to your room! We can discuss this matter to-morrow." And as soon as the gentle girl left him, the banker recovered sufficiently to drive to Gloucester, where he remained until it was time to dress for dinner. Mabel spent the intervening time in writing to her father about the gift, and in meditating upon the kindness and effrontery of the donor. It may as well be noted here that the return mail brought an answer from the Reverend Edward, in which he derided her scruples and called her a goose. It is also as well to note that this was a pious fraud, as Mr. Grahame really objected as much as his daughter to this gift, which was fully equal to a year's salary.

Mr. Grippe offered his arm to Lady Walton, who outranked the rest, being an earl's daughter as well as the wife of a baronet. Sir Henry took Heloïse down, speaking French like a practised diplomat. Next, by Mr. Grippe's arrangement, Mr. Algernon Walton, aged nineteen, with a stunning necktie, recognising "Cousin Mabel" as a former playmate at Grahame Manor, and as niece of Sir Philip Grahame, M. P., Castleton, Sussex, took that lovely maiden down, turning the gentle dove into a regular lioness for the nonce, and causing sundry young gentlemen to regret that "puppies were not drowned when they were littered"—Mr. Trumpley Wailes, for example, who escorted Miss Merton, the Squire preceding him with Mrs. Wailes. And Mr. Clinton, who followed with Sybil, passed his hand over his great beard and noticed the lack of hirsute adornments on the amiable countenance of the future baronet; and Mr. Radcliffe Merton, arriving a minute late, of course scowled malignantly at the

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voluble youngster opposite, as he slipped into the vacant seat beside Mr. Thorne.

"Ah, Mr. Merton," said Mr. Grippe, "you know the inflexible law of punctuality at Halidon, yet you have transgressed."

"Train half-an-hour late, sir," answered Radcliffe. "I came from London. Glad to see you looking so well, sir. Sir Henry, I bring you a message from Sir Philip Grahame. How d'ye do, my lady? Mrs. Wailes, I promised myself the pleasure of handing you down to dinner. Uncle, did you take my place?"

"Yes, Rad. By-the-bye, the lady opposite you is the niece of Sir Philip. Miss Grahame, my nephew, Mr. Radcliffe Merton; and Mr. Clinton next to her."

"And my adopted daughter, Mademoiselle Heloïse," said Mr. Grippe, pointing to Sir Henry's lady. "Grace, Mr. Thorne."

There were six or seven devout people at the table, who did not hear a word of Mr. Thorne's grace.

First — Mabel.

Circumstances conspired to make her very uncomfortable. She felt out of place in her magnificent dress. She had prepared her simple white muslin that had done service once or twice at Grahame Manor, and did not know how gorgeous she appeared until she looked at Heloïse in the drawing-room five minutes before dinner. Then she was confused and bewildered when Mr. Trumpley Wailes was presented by the banker, as she had given him another name. Then she was astounded by a remark of Mr. Clinton, who said he was rejoiced to meet her "at last!" with so significant an emphasis. Then she resented the evident attentions bestowed upon the "niece of Sir Philip," which plain Mabel would not have received. Then she was conscious that Algernon, who was an uncouth young cub when she knew him in Sussex, was now quite a man in his own esteem, and that he had fallen over head and ears in love with her, as his admiring looks plainly showed. And the bluff Squire's introduction of his nephew, and the identity of the latter with the "ugly man on the road," were the culminating causes of distraction. Over all her emotions, however, there swept a wave of joyful thankfulness, as the mistake she had made became clearer to her apprehension, and she unconsciously darted an eloquent glance at Wailes — remorseful, deprecating, distressed, and grateful, all at once.

Second — Wailes. For he caught the glance and analysed it rapidly. Instead of hearing Mr. Thorne's monotone, he heard the music of the spheres. He closed his eyes piously and revelled in

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dazzling sunlight shot into his soul out of violet orbs, now hidden under drooping lids.

Third — Heloïse. For she only heard the harsh accents of the curate without understanding the words. And she also caught the swift look of recognition passing from Radcliffe's feline eyes, once when he saw Mabel, and again when he saw her; and the first pangs of jealousy entered her bosom, while she mentally deplored her stupidity in making Mabel so attractive. For the dress was ordered by Heloïse, who had resorted to various pretexts to get possession of an old dress of Mabel's to send to Paris, ensuring the fit of the new one. It was not the dress, though, that attracted Radcliffe.

Fourth — Radcliffe. Here was a nice business: a three-cornered war, with a charming damsel at each point of the triangle — Heloïse, Sybil, Mabel. Was ever man so unlucky? Sybil had been set apart for him from infancy, though there had never been any love-passages between them. Heloïse — ah! he had written some infernal nonsense to her in Paris. But she would have a lot of tin when Grippe died. But Mabel, with the heavenly eyes and the look of thinly-disguised repugnance that shot from them! So far from repelling him, that glance made him more determined, and there floated through his vacillating mind half-a-dozen crude schemes by which he hoped to win her.

Fifth — the Squire. Opposite to him was a mirror, and in it he saw reflected Mr. Dipperly, who was tasting the soup which a waiter held up in the hall behind him. The door was ajar, and the Squire could see Mr. Dipperly, who was adding a little salt, with his head very much on one side. Mr. Merton thrust his napkin into his mouth to repress a guffaw.

Sixth — Mrs. Wailes. She knew Mabel. The darling! She saw the cold aversion in her eyes as she returned Radcliffe's courteous bow. She saw Clinton's steadfast scrutiny of the late-comer, sedate and hostile. Mischief brewing!

Seventh — Miss Merton. Her eye was in the corner, and she also saw Mr. Dipperly, and detected an astounding resemblance in him to a cock-sparrow with its head on one side inspecting a doubtful worm.

As the dinner progressed everybody became more comfortable. Algernon, in spite of his manhood, retained his boyish appetite, and was speedily engrossed in the discussion of dainties. Clinton seemed intent upon French, lugging in French phrases so constantly that his English appeared to get broken. He sat between Sybil and Mabel, and addressed an occasional remark to the latter touching

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the rarity of the Beechwood flowers, the convenient walking distance from Halidon, and at last with an innocent manner, though he had been artfully leading up to the point, hoped that she and Mademoiselle would renew their visit, "now that they were conventionally on speaking terms." And before Mabel could answer, he suddenly asked her if there was not a "South Terrace" at Halidon.

"I will ask you to show me the terrace, Miss Grahame," he said; "I have heard of it, and have a strong curiosity to see it."

"The library opens upon it," she answered.

"Ah! Well, you will have to show me the library. But the chambers above — are they occupied?"

"No. They are furnished and ready for occupation, but I believe they have not been used for many years."

"There is certainly some peculiarity about Gloucestershire," observed Mr. Clinton, turning to Sybil, "and it affects the houses. When I took Beechwood, there were certain chambers and corridors that were like Blue Beard's halls. I was quite bewildered for a week, trying to remember what doors to avoid."

"Have you learned your limitations yet?" said Sybil.

"*Ma foi!* yes. I have cut the Gordian knot by exploring every nook and corner of the house; and when you ladies visit me, which I hope will be shortly, I intend to take you all over the mansion."

"And your ghosts?" said Mrs. Wailes, who overheard his last remark.

"They are laid, Madam. But I intend you to hear the story first, and therefore will say nothing about them now."

"This is extraordinary claret, Mr. Grippe," said the Squire. "I retain the memory of it from one September to another. I hope you have a good supply of it."

"Yes. I got it the year I bought Halidon. But it does not see the light except on the rare occasions when you dine with me. Maguire restricts my potations to bitter beer."

"When you retire," said Clinton to Mabel, in a low tone, "these men will stay here imbibing. May I come to you in the drawing-room?"

She looked at him, surprised at the question.

"Do not looked so shocked," he said, laughing. "I am not a drinker; like Mr. Grippe, my potations are confined to beer. But when you depart, they will bring on some Burgundy, and while they are stunned by its exquisite aroma, I can easily slip out. I have a word to say to you — important to you and to — another, and you

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will have to listen. Miss Sybil, what is the rule when the Burgundy comes?"

"One glass to each lady; then you are expected to open the door for our departure, and to express great regret—"

"It is only *au revoir*, however. How shall I know when it comes?"

"Oh, Mr. Grippe will call for it—'Maison Rouge!'"

"Ha!" said Clinton, with a start, "Maison Rouge!"

"What is the latest sensation in London, Radcliffe?" said Lady Walton.

"Nothing, my lady; London is a Sahara. There was not a living soul left this morning. Sir Philip, who has been detained on Parliamentary business, went to Sussex last night."

"And the town is totally deserted!" said Mr. Grippe. "Yet I had several letters this morning from correspondents who expected replies to be sent there."

"Oh yes," said Radcliffe, unabashed; "I did not mean the city people. By-the-bye, Mr. Grippe, London is agog with a new enterprise, in which everybody is taking shares."

"Indeed! A new railway, I presume?"

"No; a mine—a Yankee mine—and for a wonder it seems to be an honest investment. Sir Philip is a director, I think, or going to be."

"Dipperly, bring the Maison Rouge," said the banker. "Ladies, I have reserved the toast for this wine. Mr. Merton assures me that I may violate the doctor's orders with impunity, and I venture upon one glass to drink your health. 'The Ladies,' gentlemen, in a bumper of Red Burgundy!"

And amid the clatter of glasses Miss Merton, Mrs. Wailes and Lady Walton nodded to one another and to Heloïse, and a rustle of silks announced the simultaneous movement of the better half of the goodly company as they swept out of the room; and while Clinton and Wailes stood at the door as the silks swept through, they both overheard the question and answer:—

"What is the name of the mine, Rad?"

"Dorado, sir. And it's a stunner!"

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CHAPTER XXX.

The South Terrace.

The gentlemen resumed their seats after the departure of the ladies, and renewed their devotions to Maison Rouge—that is, those of them who had merely risen as the ladies retired. Clinton and Wailes were both meditating an escape to the drawing-room, and the former eagerly inquired of Wailes as to the proper mode of retreat.

"You know, Wailes," he said, "neither of us wants any wine, but I am not certain about the proprieties. Would it do for a fellow just to slip out without apology?"

"But there are two fellows who would like to slip. Suppose you wait here, and I will go ask Mother about it."

"And how soon will you bring her reply, you old deceiver? No, sir; I shall go and ask Miss Sybil. Would you mind saying, if they ask for me, that I have a splitting headache, or something of the sort?"

"Yes; I think I must decline. But you may go; they are all talking about that Dorado Mine, and will not miss you. I shall privately ask Mr. Grippe to let me follow you. Now is your opportunity—away with you!"

As Clinton promptly obeyed, flitting through the door like a ghost, Trumpley slipped into the vacant seat next the banker. At the same moment James approached with a note for his master. As he tore open the envelope, Wailes saw that it was a telegram. Mr. Grippe read it twice, and bidding James order the carriage, arose from the table.

"Squire," he said, "please take my seat and maintain order until I return. Gentlemen, you will excuse me a few minutes; I have just received a telegram that requires immediate attention. Squire, you are lord of Halidon in my absence; see that your guests lack nothing. Mr. Wailes, please lend me your arm." And supported by the stalwart youth, Mr. Grippe hobbled out—not through the door that led to the drawing-room, alas! but by a side-passage into the library.

A light suspended from the ceiling lighted the spacious apartment, aided somewhat by the moonlight streaming in at the bay-window. Mr. Grippe fell into his arm-chair, and reposing his lame leg upon the stool that stood within reach, began to strangle in a paroxysm of

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asthma. Trump stood by not knowing what to do, and wondering if the old gentleman would live through the spasm.

"Shall I ring, sir?" said he at last.

Mr. Grippe nodded his head; he was past speaking, apparently. James appeared in a minute.

"James," gasped the banker, "put a shawl and rug in the carriage. When it is ready, come tell me. Get a lot of cigars from Dipperly—a dozen at least. Bring them at once."

When the cigars came Mr. Grippe pushed the salver over to Wailes.

"Light one, please," he said, "and put the rest in your pocket. Here is a match. Now let me light a cigarette. You must smoke to drown the odor of my stramonium."

While they blew two rival clouds, Mr. Grippe meditated profoundly, glancing at Wailes with sharp eyes now and again, as if to assure himself that he was doing his share of the smoking.

"Have you any money?" he asked, suddenly.

"Yes, sir—a pound or two."

"It is very rude in me, Mr. Wailes," said Grippe, "to take you away from the table; you got no Maison Rouge either."

"Yes I did, sir; I drank the ladies' health. The wine is incomparable. But I was just going to ask you to let me slip out to the ladies, when you received your telegram. I hope it is nothing serious?"

"Very serious."

"Indeed! Can I be of any service?"

"Read it and judge for yourself," said Mr. Grippe, handing the despatch. Trump unfolded it, and read:—

"From Harding, London, to Anthony Grippe, Esq., Gloucester. B and Z are the men beyond a doubt. If you are in, get out."

"Do you know what it means?" said the banker.

"No, sir. Who is Harding?"

"A detective. Have you any idea who B and Z are?"

Wailes paused, while a multitude of thoughts rushed through his mind. Mr. Grippe watched him, his eyes twinkling.

"Can it be Blauvelt and Zimmermann, the Berlin bankers?" said Wailes. Mr. Grippe's eyes still twinkled, and Wailes went on rapidly, "I believe I see it all: These men have been forging bills! And you remitted them fifteen thousand pounds to-day! I wrote the letter in German. What must I do, sir?"

"Take the limited mail at eleven-thirty; go to Berlin and see what you can do. They have the advantage of one mail, and the bills will

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be drawn no doubt; but something may turn up. I will give you credentials to Von Kapf. Here are fifty pounds in bank-notes. Now understand the case. I dare not telegraph Von Kapf, lest these fellows should have sent genuine bills after all. I cannot tell certainly until the day after to-morrow, when they will be paid or rejected. I will telegraph you at Berlin on Thursday morning, care of Von Kapf. I am *sure* it is a fraud, but cannot so treat it until Thursday. I have no instructions to give you. Act as you would act if your own money were at stake; be cool, cautious, watchful and prompt. If the money is lost, it is lost; if it is saved, it will be by your pluck and energy. Stop in Paris and see Delisle. Do you know his address?"

"Yes, sir — Sixty-four, Rue Scribe."

"Right. Tell him everything; he may help you. Anyhow, he is a correspondent of Blauvelt and Zimmermann. Whatever rascality has been perpetrated, you may safely attribute it to Blauvelt. Zimmermann is a stupid, honest German. I am not sure about Blauvelt, but think he is a Belgian."

"Ha!" said Wailes. "Have you seen him, sir?"

"Many times."

"Is he a tall, sallow man, with a heavy moustache, black, hanging over his mouth, and nearly covering his chin?"

"You describe him exactly."

"I know him. Ah, Mr. Blauvelt, you have taken to banking then! He is a Belgian, sir. He was my French tutor in Germany."

Mr. Grippe took two cards from his pocket, and wrote on the backs: "Credit Mr. Wailes, the bearer.—A. Grippe," and gave them to Trumpley.

"One for Von Kapf, the other for Delisle; they will answer your purpose better than formal letters. And now what will you do about clothes? You can't go flying over Europe in a dress-suit, and my clothes will not fit you."

"I have a portmanteau at Beechwood; I dressed there this afternoon. I will stop there, change my dress, and go on to Gloucester. It is ten o'clock. I will just tell Mother —"

"Stop; I'll go for Mrs. Wailes. Those charming ladies would chatter like a thousand magpies if they knew of your departure. I'll bring Mrs. Wailes here. Wait for me."

And taking his cane, Mr. Grippe hobbled out. Wailes walked over to the bay-window and looked out upon the South Terrace. The moonlight was deluging the lawn and terrace, and turning all

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nature into fairyland. The banker was absent five minutes; it seemed to Wailes five years. When he returned, accompanied by Mrs. Wailes, Trumpley looked at them in stupid bewilderment.

"Madam," said Mr. Grippe, "very urgent business calls your son away. He must go to London, to Paris, and perhaps further. There is no one else whom I could trust to manage the affair. He will go to-night. The mission is quite secret, and I expect to get him quietly away without disturbing my guests."

"Very well, sir. Are you ready, Trump?"

"Yes," said Wailes, with dull indifference.

"What the devil has come over the man!" said Grippe, viciously. "I left him but now full of fire and energy—"

"Carriage ready, sir," said James, poking his head in at the door.

"Drive round to the terrace. Are you unwell, Mr. Wailes?"

"No, sir," answered Trump. "Please excuse me; I have been dreaming, and was wakened suddenly. I shall be all right when I get out in the air. Good-night, Mother. I will do my best, sir. I am quite ready."

"Away with you then; I will make your excuses. Go out at this door. Here is the carriage. James, go with him—to Beechwood first, and then to Gloucester. Mr. Wailes wishes to catch the midnight train—or rather the eleven-thirty. Do not loiter."

Trump kissed his mother, shook hands with the banker, and went out on the terrace. As he laid his hand on the door of the carriage, Clinton stood suddenly at his side.

"Wailes," he said, "it is you then who are going. I saw James putting the rug into the carriage, and that indicates a journey. May I ask where you are going?"

"Certainly. To London."

"And beyond?"

"Perhaps. Why do you ask?"

"Because I feel a strong interest in you—stronger than ever before. Do not repulse me, I beg of you. You are going to Beechwood first?"

"Yes—to change my dress."

"Grant me one favor. Will you?"

"If I can," said Wailes, struggling to maintain his composure. "What is it?"

"You will find a revolver on the dressing-table in your room. Take it with you."

"Pish!" said Trump, impatiently. "What can I want with weapons?"

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"Take it, I tell you!" said Clinton, stamping on the gravel. "You promised."

"Very well; good-night," and springing past him he entered the carriage, pulling the door to after him.

Poor Trump! While he was gazing out of the bay-window he saw Clinton and Mabel on the South Terrace. They were in earnest conversation; and while the door that admitted his mother and Mr. Grippe was turning on its hinges he saw Clinton seize Mabel's hand and hide it in his great beard, she not resisting. He could see their faces; hers eager and excited, and his full of exultation, while he covered her hand with kisses.

And while the carriage sped on towards Gloucester he tried to shut out the scene by closing his eyes. The hedge-rows that were flying past *were* shut out, but the terrace and the two agitated figures upon it burned his eye-balls.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Another Departure.

Mr. Radcliffe Merton was equal to most emergencies, but his powers were certainly put to the proof at Mr. Grippe's entertainment. He was eager to be present because he was certain to see Mabel; Tim had tracked her to Halidon beyond doubt. He expected to make an easy conquest. She was a governess or companion, and the attentions of the heir to Merton Park could not fail to flatter her vanity and awaken her gratitude. When he was fairly confronted by this governess, clad in rich silks, and evidently honored as the niece of Sir Philip Grahame, he felt rather less secure. And when her pleasant countenance, beautified by smiles, settled into cold gravity at his introduction, while her delicate nostrils assumed a more decided curve, he concluded to omit the *veni vidi vici* form of assault and proceed circumspectly.

What should he do with Heloïse? No doubt about her recognition. Why, court her furiously, of course. This would give him constant access to Halidon, the cage that contained these two pretty birds; and he would find or make opportunities for his true courtship. As he stole furtive glances at Mabel during the progress of the dinner, he found the desire to win her growing into a determination,

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and when the ladies retired from the dining-room he registered a vow that he would kill any man who stood between him and Mabel.

And Sybil — what about Sybil? Well, she seemed to be very much entertained and quite contented with the attentions of that Yankee fellow with the big beard. The Yankee seemed to be spoony too. What an ugly devil he was!

The Squire was eager for whist, and moved adjournment to the drawing-room pretty soon after Mr. Grippe left the table. Radcliffe had not quite finished his cigar; he would take a turn on the lawn, and join the ladies in a few minutes. That Maison Rouge was insidious, and a turn or two would dispel its influence.

Rather cool in that Yankee fellow, with his lot of vulgar tin, and his lordly airs at Beechwood, to be so impressive in his devotion to Sybil. Stole the tin, no doubt. What did Sir Henry know about him? He did not seem to think Mr. Radcliffe Merton worthy of any special attention either. Curse his impudence! he looked as grave and sedate as a judge, and had not the ghost of a smile for Radcliffe's best jokes. He had met him somewhere, certainly; must have been long ago. Clinton? Never heard that name. But a Yankee could have a dozen names. There was that Göttingen Yankee. Ah! Stratton. Of course! the very same.

Oh ho! Mr. Trump, you knew Stratton, and you have not told me. You are very thick; close friends, I hear. I begin to think you will bear watching, Mr. Trump. And talking of watching, there is Mr. Trump on the terrace. Not alone — I see the lavender silk. Can it be the French girl? Mabel!

He moved away from the house, threw his cigar in the grass, and passing behind a clump of rose-bushes, he had a better view of the terrace. Mabel certainly; and not Trump, but Stratton, kissing her hand as if he would eat it up!

Hist! here comes the carriage. What is up now? Mabel disappeared. Wailes at the carriage, and Stratton beside him. Carriage off, and terrace deserted. He would go in and see what it meant. Now, be cautious!

The whist-table; the Squire and Lady Walton against Mr. Grippe and Mr. Thorne. Sir Henry seated by Sybil; Algernon playing backgammon with Miss Lucy. The Beechwood magnate at the piano with Heloïse, actually playing a duetto with her. That was another proof; Stratton was quite a famous pianist at Göttingen. Ah! if he had only given that rapier another twist or two. Too late to regret that now; he would find an opportunity to do it over. Mean-

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time he was devoted to music, and took a seat near the pair of brilliant performers. How they jabbered!

"Lentement, Monsieur," said Heloïse.

"Comme ça?"

"Oui, merci!" and the duo leaped out under their nimble fingers like a shower of sparks. This required enormous philosophy. The French was easy enough, if they would only talk slowly and distinctly; but they would not. They fairly gallopped, gliding from one word to another as if their tongues were oiled. Oh, if he had only emulated Trump's diligence and attended to Blauvelt's instructions!

Blauvelt! By-the-bye, he would bear watching too. Mem.: attend to Blauvelt to-morrow. Here comes Mrs. Wailes.

"Mr. Grippe," said that lady, "Miss Grahame has charged me with apologies and regrets to you and your guests. She sprained her ankle in stepping from the South Terrace. I happened to be in the library, and assisted her up-stairs, and by virtue of my superior age I obliged her to go to bed. I have applied the proper remedies, and she does not suffer."

"Oh! Ah! Indeed! Very sorry, I am sure. Excuse her?—certainly," said everybody.

"Ma belle! In pain?" said Heloïse, starting up from the piano. "I will go to her."

"She also charged me to forbid you, Mademoiselle. She will sleep presently. Besides, I am going back to her to tell her how kindly you all excuse her, and to bid her good-night."

"Tim!" said Mr. Radcliffe, leaning from the window, "Tim! are you there?"

"Yessir."

"Can you bring the cart in a minute?"

"Half a minit, sir."

"Mr. Grippe," said Radcliffe, "the rosy hours have glided away so swiftly that I did not mark their flight. I am obliged to be in London to-morrow. May I call on my return, and make the acquaintance of these charming ladies?"

"Halidon gates are always open to you, Mr. Merton," said the banker, with a bow. "But you cannot get the train; it passes at eleven-thirty."

"Yes; and it is now fifteen minutes earlier, and my trap is at the door. I shall have two minutes to spare. Ladies and gentlemen, the railway officials allow no time for parting speeches—good-night!"

And as the dog-cart came up the drive he sprang into the seat,

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gathered up the reins, trotted gently through the lodge-gates, and then sped along the highroad at the rate of twenty miles to the hour.

At Beechwood Mr. Merton encountered a wreck. A hind-wheel was on the roadside, and Mr. Grippe's carriage drawn out of the roadway and squatted ungracefully in the gutter. James was busy with the horses, and the coachman was prowling over the road in earnest search.

"Hillo!" said Radcliffe, half-checking his horses, "what is amiss?"

"Wheel hoff," said the coachman; "linch-pin lost."

"Get a stake, fasten it to the front axle, and support the hind one. You can get home that way. G'long, Maggie!"

Beyond the bend of the road a pedestrian, smoking a short pipe.

"Hillo, Podd!" said Radcliffe, "what are you about?"

"Looking for the linch-pin," answered Podd, with a grin. "Carriage broke down just as he came out of the gate."

"He? Whom?"

"Wailes. He just rolled out, snatched up his pock-mantle, and tore up the road. Two mile to Gloster — ho, ho!"

"G'long, Maggie! he'll miss the train."

"Miss the dickens!" said Podd, savagely, as the dog-cart spun away. "I s'pose you'll pick him up. You're a nice pair of 'risto-crats! I'd like to take out one of *your* linch-pins too!"

Mr. Podd turned back and found Memnon attaching a beam to the axle. The carriage could be gotten home now; and because the urgency was over, the gardener happened to stumble upon the lost linch-pin. The wheel was replaced, and after a moment's consultation, James clambered up on the box, and the carriage proceeded at a rapid rate towards Gloucester.

"The fools!" said Podd. "I hear the train now, crossing the bridge at Merton's Brook. Do they s'pose that fiery young devil will wait for them? I'll sit down here and wait for them to come back, and get a lift as far as old Grippe's. Hi! darkey! are you there?"

"I'se here, Podd," answered Memnon, soberly.

"Lucky I found that pin."

"Werry lucky. I spec you knew whar to hunt."

"What?" said Podd, startled.

"I spec some po' white trash pulled out dat pin while gemplen in de house gittin his trunk."

"How did you get that fool's notion into your head?"

"Werry easy. Part ob it come in froo my eyes. I seed you in de road when carriage come fust."

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"Well," said Podd, feeling slightly uneasy, "what of it?"

"Den I seed you lookin' for linch-pin up de road. You not werry drunk, and you knowed de carriage not bin up de road at all. Den you found de pin in gully on dis side. De wheel come from de off side; how de debil did linch-pin git ober heah? Did him crawl?"

"I've a good mind to knock your black head off!" said Podd, in a rage.

"Spec you'd better not, Podd," replied Memnon.

"Why should I not?" said Podd, menacingly.

"Because I'll mash your mouf if you comes close enough for my fist; and if you was spry enough to handle me — only you aint — why den Mars Clint would hab you hung. Spec you'll git hung soon enough, anyhow. Better go home now; you'se a little drunk. Heah comes the carriage back. Spec you'd better walk. Driver won't gib you ride, I reckon; you aint werry clean."

The carriage swept by at a good pace. The coachman had gotten near enough to Gloucester to see the London train flying down the road. Memnon shouldered his beam and retired within the gates, closing them inhospitably behind him. And Mr. Podd, chewing the stump of his pipe, and the cud of sweet and bitter fancies, crawled slowly down the road towards Merton, so glum and ugly that the moonlight, which beautified everything else, only served to make his ugliness more apparent.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ASTHMATIC.

Mabel stood in the shadow when Trumpley passed across the terrace, and Clinton left her side to address a few words to him, as already recorded. The door stood open, and thinking she would go to her room and compose her mind before she encountered the drawing-room lights, she stepped upon the sill; her foot turned, and she fell forward into the library. When she attempted to rise she found herself unable to walk without assistance. As she sunk into a chair with a moan, Mrs. Wailes re-entered the apartment, intending to say a parting word to Trump about taking care of his precious health, avoiding draughts, damp beds and the like. The sight of Mabel arrested her.

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"Miss Grahame!" she said, approaching her, "you are in pain. Are you ill?"

"I think I have sprained my ankle, madam. Pray, do not mind me; it will be better presently, and I can get up stairs."

"Let me help you, my dear," said Mrs. Wailes; "lean on me. Is this the stair? I am so glad I found you. Does it pain?"

"Yes, ma'am. But I do not heed that; I suffer more in the memory of my—"

"Hush! Is this your room? Ah! it is next my bed-chamber. My dear, for more than twenty years that was my domain; it is the large room over the South Terrace. Now lie down here and let me see how badly you are hurt."

"Oh, madam, I cannot bear this kindness! Only let me explain my conduct—"

Mrs. Wailes laid her hand upon the rosy lips, and when she took it away she kissed them.

"My darling," she said tenderly, "you shall not tell me a word. Be satisfied; I am perfectly sure that you can explain everything, but not now. I will listen to your story, or as much of it as you please to tell me, at the proper time. Now let me take off your shoe. Ah! swollen a little. Who will answer the bell if I ring?"

"Lucy, our little maid. What do you require, madam?"

"Only a little ice," said Mrs. Wailes, ringing the bell. "You must be quiet now and obey orders. Lucy, bring me a cup full of pounded ice. I must have this stocking off; that is soon done. I am going to wrap your foot up in ice. If you lie still it will be well in an hour or two. How did you do it?"

"My foot turned under me. I—I was looking over my shoulder at the carriage, and missed the step. Oh! Mrs. Wailes—"

"Will you be quiet or not?" said Mrs. Wailes, with affected asperity. "Here is the ice. Give me a towel, Lucy; Miss Grahame has hurt her ankle. You will be more comfortable with your dress off, my dear. Lucy, assist Miss Grahame, while I prepare the ice."

In five minutes Miss Grahame was propped up snugly on the bed, her foot enveloped in ice, and the pain gone. Then Mrs. Wailes proposed going down to explain her absence. Mabel objected.

"I will return, child," she said, laughing. "Do you think I am going to leave you thus? Not I."

"You will not let me talk to you," said Mabel, clinging to her neck as she bent over her, "but you cannot keep me from loving you."

"You darling!" was the response. "Don't you know that I love

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you dearly ever since you clung to me so piteously that evening? Do you remember?"

"Ah! can I ever forget! My mother died when I was so young that I have only a dim apprehension of her love and tenderness; but when you kissed me that night it all came back again, and you seemed to take all the love and duty that I owed to her."

"Wait until I come back and you shall tell me a little. The gay people down stairs will miss you, but they will not miss me. Shall I bring Mademoiselle?"

"No, ma'am. Please bid her stay; she has been pining for company so long. Mr. Clinton will take my place as interpreter. Do you know Mr. Clinton?"

"Oh yes. He dined with me at Rose Cottage, and I have dined at Beechwood with him, Trump and I."

In the short absence of the elder lady Mabel reflected. How much could she tell? She was so kind that she would be satisfied with a little explanation. She must remember to mention no names. She had been cautioned. Was there ever so lovely a lady — so wise and so good! Here she is again.

"Now sit by me, dear madam, and listen to a short explanation. My father told me a long story of old times. He said I would meet in Gloucestershire certain people, and among them he named two, mother and son. I had never been away from him before, except for a few days at a time at my uncle's in Sussex, and he was anxious about me naturally. 'If you encounter this lady and her son,' he said, 'either or both, avoid them at all risks. Have no intercourse with them, or either of them.' Oh, madam! I thought the brave gentleman who rescued me from the river was the son, and you the mother!"

"And therefore you fled?"

"Yes, with my heart bleeding; and I never knew until to-night that I was mistaken. Now, can you forgive me for ingratitude and rudeness unparalleled?"

"Poor child! I have never doubted for a moment that some satisfactory reason existed for your flight. How came you to fall into the mistake?"

"Will you forgive me if I do not tell you? I am bound to silence."

"Say no more, my dear. I believe I know, anyhow."

"I hope not," answered Mabel, distressed, "Pray tell me what Mr. Wailes said —"

"He said very little, but he walked to Gloucester after you."

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"Yes," said Mabel, "I saw him coming, and hid on the roadside until he passed. Did he say I was heartless and ungrateful?"

"He said, 'Mother, read this note; every word is a tear. I know this lady is under some overbearing compulsion, and I will never rest until I find out what it is.' But neither Trump nor I doubted you a moment."

Mabel drew her hand to her and kissed it.

"And you will tell him that I have never forgotten for a moment that he saved my life, that I have prayed so earnestly for him, thinking he was wicked — and he so good and noble! Oh, wasted prayers!"

"Prayers are never wasted, Mabel. Shall I call you Mabel?"

"Dear, dear friend!" replied the girl.

"Prayers cannot be wasted. They are among the forces of Nature, and never lost. Sometimes they are misapplied, but they always reach the Hearer; and He directs the force in wisdom and mercy, as He directs the winds. Here is the carriage. My boy is on the train we heard."

"Gone!" said Mabel.

"Yes. Mr. Grippe has sent him to London, perhaps to Paris, on some important business. Did you know he was in the bank?"

"I knew there was a Mr. Wailes," answered Mabel, blushing. "Mr. Grippe has told me a great deal about him, but I never dreamed that it was your son. Mr. Grippe says he is the most extraordinary young man he ever knew. Oh, madam, how happy you ought to be!"

"I am not very happy just now," answered Mrs. Wailes, rising, "because it is past midnight, and I must leave you. I hear the Squire's voice, and I go home in his carriage. My love, you are as a dear daughter to me. There shall be nothing between us to separate us henceforth. You will come to me whenever you can, will you not?"

"Yes, ma'am, if I may. Before you go, let me tell you something more. I came here in answer to an advertisement. Mr. Grippe brought Heloïse from Paris, and engaged me as companion, teacher — what you please — at fifty guineas a year. My father is a clergyman in a poor district, with small income and many pensioners, and I wished to earn the fifty guineas for him."

"That was very creditable, Mabel."

"But, madam," said Mabel, not heeding the interruption, "he brought me this expensive dress to-day, saying he desired me to

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dress like Heloïse; and when I expostulated, he was seized with a terrible fit of asthma. Oh, he has it most dreadfully! So I had to wear the dress—"

"It is lovely, Mabel."

"Yes, ma'am; but I hate the sight of it. I cannot bear to wear it. It is a sham, a pretence. It is equal to the hypocrisy of introducing 'Miss Grahame, the niece of Sir Philip.' Though he did not do that, still it enraged me to find everybody so polite to the silk dress and Sir Philip's niece."

"Pride, my dear," said Mrs. Wailes.

"Nay, madam; it is only honesty. I cannot afford to wear such attire. It is like borrowing," she added, with a shudder. "Please tell me what to do."

"State your case to Mr. Grippe to-morrow," said Mrs. Wailes, amused at her vehemence. "Tell him what you have told me. Do you like him? Is he kind to you?"

"Very kind—always kind and considerate. I love him and could not bear to pain him. And he gets a fit of asthma whenever he pleases, and I am really afraid he will strangle sometimes. Heloïse always runs in horror when a spasm comes. I would pay for the horrid dress, but it must have cost dreadfully."

"Why do you object to the gift from Mr. Grippe?" asked Mrs. Wailes.

"Gift! How dare he offer me a gift! and so expensive a gift. I don't want gifts."

"Very well, Mabel; it will avail nothing to argue with you in your present temper. Don't burn the dress, or cut it up, or give it away, until I see you again. Good-bye, darling."

On the following morning Mr. Grippe requested Miss Grahame to grant him an interview in the library after breakfast. There was no necessity for this retirement, as they were quite alone in the breakfast-room, Heloïse being sound asleep in her chamber; but Mr. Grippe had an idea that there was more solemnity about an "interview in the library" than belonged to ordinary conversation. He led her to a seat, and placing himself opposite, began by asking if she had quite recovered from her accident. He had already made the inquiry at the table, but it was a good introduction, so he did it again.

"Quite recovered, I thank you, sir."

"You fell, I believe?" said Mr. Grippe.

"Yes, sir. My foot turned there at the door."

"I hope you did not damage your pretty dress," said the banker, with a little cough.

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"No, sir; not at all. I wished to speak to you—"

"Stop a minute, please! You will not mind a whiff of stramonium? No? I hope I am not going to have a turn—"

"Please don't get it until I say a word or two!" said Mabel, eagerly.

Mr. Grippe chuckled, but shook his head doubtfully. "My dear, let me say a word or two first. May I talk freely?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Well, I am an old man, and have not long to live. I shall go off like a whiff of smoke some day. Ah, there comes a turn!"

"Oh don't have it, Mr. Grippe! Smoke a cigarette."

"Never mind, child; it makes very little difference. There will be very few to lament the death of Old Grippe."

"How can you talk in that way, sir!"

"Well, I thought you might have some kind feeling for a desolate old man. But no! you don't care enough for him to accept a gift that cost a few pounds, though you know how deeply your refusal wounds me."

"But, Mr. Grippe—"

"Stop, child! Why should not Heloïse object to her dress? It is exactly like yours."

"It is quite proper for your adopted daughter to take any present you offer; but you humiliate me when you give me this costly present."

"How! Humiliate you! You astonish me."

"Because I am poor. I have nothing that accords with this dress. When I quit your service I go back to my father and his poor parishioners. How would this dress look in Blackfriars?"

"You shan't go back to Blackfriars! You cannot have everything your own way. I increase your salary; it is fifty guineas and a dress, or as many dresses as I please. I can increase salaries when I please. If you don't take this dress I'll order a trunkfull by to-day's mail. Adopted daughter! I'll adopt you too, and then I'll go off in a fit of asthma, and you and Heloïse can divide my estate. I'll do it to-day!" and he stumped around the room, coughing and choking.

"I'll keep the dress, sir," said Mabel, humbly, "but please don't buy any more. Oh dear, he's going to choke!"

"Run away, child!" gasped the sufferer; "I'll soon be better."

And while the gentle maiden, conscience-stricken, was reproaching herself for her cruel assault upon the invalid, Mr. Grippe was

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hobbling around the library, indulging in a diabolical chuckle between the asthmatic spasms that threatened his life. Mabel folded her dress and laid it away for the next party. Mr. Grippe ordered his carriage and drove to Gloucester.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE START.

Up to the vision on the South Terrace at Halidon Mr. Wailes had indulged in many cogitations, debating questions of propriety and questions of policy, all referring to his pursuit of Mabel Grahame. It is certain that he would have resolved many doubts and dispelled many illusions by a determined application to the lady herself, had he not been deterred by his knightly sense of propriety. How could he intrude himself upon a lady who was under weighty obligations to him? He could not ask for an interview without seeming to ask for an acknowledgment of this obligation. Again, he had been most palpably shunned by the lady — once, certainly, and perhaps two or three times. At the Cathedral it was a positive repulse; at the station when she swept by him it was a clear cut. How could he ignore this repeated rejection?

There was another set of cogitations. He never doubted that he was ready to love the maiden; but there were obstacles. With an assured income of four hundred pounds, very comfortable love in a cottage was attainable; but Trump did not believe in love in a cottage; he did not like cottages. And while he very eagerly engaged in his banking apprenticeship, and hoped to rise to higher places and better revenue in time, he could not endure the idea of his wife's assistance in the business of money-making. Even the practice of economy, from which he did not shrink in his own case, was repugnant to him when he contemplated the matrimonial state. Then he had no "expectations" excepting those that referred to his own exertions. The process by which he hoped to augment his resources was a slow process. His entrance upon his career was an astounding success, altogether exceptional, and the death of Brand, his predecessor, had happened very opportunely to make his position permanent and secure. Mr. Grippe had a disagreeable habit of putting new interests into his

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charge without warning, and another disagreeable habit of saying nothing to indicate approval or the contrary as he performed his duties. Mr. Choppy, the best paid man in the bank, received a salary of six hundred pounds. Mr. Wailes had decided already that an equal sum, added to his original two hundred, was the least amount of ballast that would warrant his embarkation upon the stormy sea of matrimony.

With these convictions upon his mind, there was a constantly recurring and perplexing question disturbing him. Suppose he should get speech of Mabel, and overcome her repugnance and establish friendly relations — what then? Could he make love to her, and entangle her in an indefinite engagement? Never! His mother had a habit in their colloquies of referring to her five hundred as if it were his, and in spite of his sturdy independence he had caught himself once and again adding this sum to his four, with a blissful apprehension of the consequent possibilities. But he always shook off this dream, and always registered a new vow that no inducement would avail to make him depend upon his mother's annuity.

The last time he indulged in this interesting arithmetical exercise was during the pronunciation of Mr. Thorne's grace. He had caught Mabel's look a moment before, and it seemed to him that he would accept any conditions that smoothed his way to her side. After dinner he would surely find opportunity to exchange a few sentences — and the ice once broken! She passed through the door while he held it open, and just gave him a look out of the violets; but it was enough to make every drop of blood in his body dance a fandango.

Then came the South Terrace; and then chaos.

In the midst of his bewilderment, however, there came also two clear convictions. First, that Mr. Clinton possessed the very necessity, *sine qua non*, the lack of which had hampered himself — money in abundance. He had thought of Mabel always as adorning high station, and there had always been a vague prophecy in his mind that she should be mistress of Halidon. The attainment of money enough to buy Halidon was hardly possible to him, short of a miracle; yet Mr. Grippe got it from less beginnings. Then second, that Mr. Clinton probably deserved her. It was difficult to acknowledge it, but he found that he would readily admit Clinton's fitness for any other damsel of his acquaintance. The American had grown upon him of late, showing so much manliness, generosity, candor, and manifesting constantly an eagerness for his friendship that was certainly flattering. And even at the moment of the shock, when Clinton

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pressed up to him, and out of anxiety for his welfare and safety urged him to take his weapon, he could not find it in his jealous heart to repulse him.

As Mr. Grippe's carriage rolled along the road, he asked himself a hundred times if there could be any mistake about the scene on the terrace. Clinton, vehement, passionate, full of ardor! — this was beyond controversy. Mabel, shrinking a little at first, but as if overcome by the other's impetuous pleading, yielding her hand to him and clearly consenting when he kissed it tenderly. And so the answer always came that these attitudes, still floating before his closed eyes, could indicate nothing but an ardent love-plea and its success. It was a very sudden business. He saw Mr. Clinton presented as a stranger and so received by Mabel; but there must have been some previous acquaintance. Where, when, how long?

Probably Wailes would have suffered more keenly under these disappointments and perplexities had he not been oppressed with the weight of responsibility so suddenly thrust upon him by Mr. Grippe.

Starting for what place — London, Paris, Berlin? with fifty pounds in his pocket, on a wild-goose chase! His instructions were, "Go and do what you can"; and there was no conceivable thing to do. A practised rogue had forged drafts for fifteen thousand two hundred pounds — he remembered the exact sum — Grippe had remitted bills on Paris in settlement, and the rogue had one mail — equivalent to one day — the start of him. It was not possible for him to reach Paris before the bills were cashed; and Blauvelt would be too prompt in his movements to wait his arrival. This much might be taken for granted. What next?

Blauvelt would bolt.

The next thing was to find him, and finding him, to throttle him and force him to disgorge. He remembered his old tutor as a truculent fellow, cold-blooded and remorseless; but the difficulties in his mind all lay between his start and his encounter with the Belgian. He made no provision for the contest, but would wait for the emergency.

Arrived at Beechwood, he found Memnon, and getting a candle, changed his dress, repacked his portmanteau, and resumed his seat in the carriage. A few yards from the gate the hind-wheel came off, and after a short search for the linch-pin, Trumpley caught up his portmanteau and hurried up the road. By swift walking, crossing the common, going through byways and lanes, he could catch the train. Half a mile further he found the portmanteau too heavy, and determined to get rid of it. Selecting a spot where the trees grew

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near the roadside, he dropped it over the hedge, and then sped along the road unincumbered. He made the best time on the last quarter, as he heard the rumble of the approaching train crossing the bridge over Merton's Brook. O that bridge! But he choked down his memories, rushed into the station, secured his ticket, and fell panting into the seat the guard showed him. As the door closed with a bang, he saw Radcliffe Merton pass the window and enter the next compartment, and then, with a preliminary snort, the train glided smoothly out of the station.

Limited mail, going forty-five miles an hour. He wound his watch, and noticing that his fellow-voyagers were all smoking, he lighted one of the cigars that Mr. Grippe had forced upon him at starting. Under its soothing influence he became tranquil, and when he threw away the stump, he leaned back upon the cushion and fell asleep.

"Reading! Ticket, please! Lunnon? All right, sir! Smoking carriage? Yessir. Next stop? Eton."

Falling asleep again after the interruption, yet enough awake to notice the departure of the passengers who had ridden this far with him, and the entrance of another. Then the rasping of a match, the flare, and Mr. Radcliffe Merton's ugly moustache lighted up an instant, and then darkness again. Trumpley slept on, with his eyes open.

What in the world was Rad going back to London for? London was a desert. He had left him at the table, and the thought passed through his mind that Rad was taking too much Maison Rouge. He had pushed aside the small glass, and filled his water-goblet with the ruby wine. Trump thought that was in bad taste, and was shocked; and when Grippe called him out, Rad was filling the goblet a second time. He was breathing in a thick, choking style now, something like Mr. Grippe's asthma, puffing away at his cigar too rapidly to "get the good of it."

There is a peculiarity about Burgundy. The muddiness of apprehension and other symptoms that follow rapidly when champagne is imbibed, come more slowly after Burgundy. The effects last longer. If one desires to get tipsy thoroughly, and to stay tipsy a good while, Burgundy is the tipple adapted to that end. The better the Burgundy the more pronounced the tipsiness. And Maison Rouge was the best in England. Well-educated topers are unanimous upon these points.

Better sleep the night out. In fact Rad had dropped his cigar half smoked, and was snoring in his corner. But Trumpley was wide awake now, and when the guard took their tickets Radcliffe swore at

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him crossly and fell asleep again. Then came houses and houses, miles of them, and when the train stopped in the gray dawn, Mr. Wailes quietly left his companion to his dreams, and took the tidal train for Dover.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CLINTON'S STORY.

While Mrs. Wailes was adjusting her wrappings preparatory to the general leave-taking at Halidon, and while Trump was sleeping between Gloucester and Reading, Mr. Clinton approached and begged permission to drive her home.

"I have been perplexed to find an excuse, madam," he said ingenuously, "but Providence has helped me. I was most anxious to have an hour's talk with you, but having brought Miss Sybil here I was bound to take her back. The Squire, however, has just informed me that 'Baby' must go in the close carriage. That arrangement would leave Mr. Thorne for me, unless you will consent to go with me and thus add to my burden of obligation."

"I will go with great pleasure," said Mrs. Wailes, "and I congratulate you upon your success in hiding your disappointment at the enforced exchange."

"What *can* you mean, Mrs. Wailes?"

"I mean your driving me instead of Sybil."

"Oh!" said Clinton, reddening, "Miss Sybil is a pleasant companion certainly, and she is teaching me how to drive; but in this instance I am very glad to take you instead. Besides, I am going to drive her to-morrow."

"I am not sure that it is prudent in Sybil to give you these frequent lessons," said Mrs. Wailes, when the ponies were trotting down the road; "she may teach you more than you expect to learn."

"Do you mean that I shall fall in love with her?"

"Yes."

"And why not?" said Clinton.

"Because it is thought that Mr. Radcliffe Merton has a prior claim."

"Indeed! Did he get it by inheritance?" said Clinton.

"Partly, I suppose. He is heir to Merton Park, and I think the

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Squire intends Sybil for him. This is only gossip, however. I thought it better to warn you before your young affections were hopelessly bestowed."

"You are always kind and thoughtful, madam, and I recognise your goodness, though you profess to joke. May I tell you a story?"

"Certainly."

"Many years ago, when I was quite young, I was sent to Germany to be educated. My uncle, who was my guardian, consigned me to his friend, Dr. Kayser, and I lived most of my German life in his family. He had one daughter, Gretchen, a year or two younger than I. She was always in feeble health, inheriting pulmonary weakness — a pure-minded little maiden, and after we became acquainted we were great friends. I taught her English, and she taught me German. I think we loved each other sincerely, as brother and sister. Flirtation, as a science, is unknown to German girls, and I am sure neither of us ever thought of love-making. I had no kindred, excepting my uncle, or at least I knew of no other, and the affectionate friendship of Gretchen was the bright spot in my life.

"After a year or two of preliminary study under Dr. Kayser, I had to go through the University. This was eight miles from the Doctor's house, and I therefore had to separate from these friends and take up my abode in the University town. But once a week I walked to my old home, spending Sunday with Gretchen, and walking back on Monday.

"My new companions did not interest me much. They were wild students who did not study, but drank quantities of beer, and quarrelled constantly. As a rule they did not molest me, as I was studious and shy; but there were two young Englishmen at the University, who were civil and obliging, and I became tolerably friendly with them. One of them I liked; from the other I recoiled instinctively. As they were countrymen, they were close friends of course, and they were no more attracted to me than to the German and Swiss students. I could not cultivate the friendship of the man I liked, because he preferred the society of his countryman, whom I disliked; so we had but little intercourse.

"You can hardly understand my isolation, unless I enter more into particulars. The students, with few exceptions, were governed by principles entirely new to me. I was from a country where men quickly responded to insult, and where prolonged quarrels were unknown. My idea of righting wrongs was to make the time and place of settlement accord with the time and place of the injury, and to settle with efficient weapons. The Germans quarrelled deliberately,

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and fought the next night, generally with broad-swords, with their bodies encased in sword-proof wrappings. The object to be attained was to cut a bit from the adversary's nose. The whole business was eminently ridiculous to me; but each student was expected to learn some sword-play, and I took my lessons with the rest. I had no heart in it, however, and made no advances beyond the first easy lessons."

"My friend," said Mrs. Wailes, interrupting him, "you do yourself injustice; Trump says you fence like some renowned old sworder — I forget whom."

"Ah, yes; but I learned later, and for a purpose," said Clinton, with a grim smile.

"Another ground of separation between me and the students was their cold-blooded profaneness. They seemed to think acquiescence in time-honored principles of piety the height of absurdity. They discussed the most sacred and awful mysteries with flippant jests; and though I was probably but little if any better than they in practice, I could not listen to these debates without horror. One of the Englishmen — he whom I disliked — participated in these discussions, and was as pronounced an infidel as any. The other did not join these debating clubs, but he stuck to his friend.

"Next to their profane gabble, the thing most distasteful to me was the rude style in which they talked of women. They spoke of them hardly as respectfully as I would speak of my fillies; and in this also they were rivalled by the ugly Englishman. In my country devotion to the sex was genuine and universal, and I really did not know that men of ordinary civilisation who had ever known mothers could hold the theories these fellows professed.

"I am coming to the end of my story. One Sunday Gretchen was cold and distant. I asked her to explain the change in her manner, but she declined all explanation, and left me to entertain the old Doctor after the early dinner. Gretchen was the solitary friend I had in the wide world. When the Doctor fell asleep after his pipe was smoked out, I went in search of Gretchen. She was in a little summer-house at the bottom of the garden. I walked softly over the grass, and looking through the lattice-work, I saw the English rascal seated by her side, and she listening with animated countenance to his lying speeches. I retired as softly as I came, and without waiting for adieux walked back to the University.

"It was just dark when he came back. Our French tutor was with him, and they were conversing gaily. The Englishman was telling Blauvelt — that was the tutor's name — how he had stolen a march

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upon me, what lies he had told Gretchen of my profaneness in debate and my low estimate of women. He expressed his own sentiments exactly, and had made Gretchen believe they were mine. I was at the window of my room. I believe now that these villains selected the spot so that I should overhear them; and I rushed down and into the street, struck the Englishman in the face, and demanded a written retraction of his atrocious slanders. Half-a-dozen students were around us in a moment, and before I knew what I was doing I found myself in the fencing-hall, a sword in my hand, and this wretched cur opposed to me.

"In a few minutes his sword was through my body, and I was carried to my lodgings unconscious. It was a very serious wound, and weeks elapsed before I was allowed to leave my bed. When I was able to go out I obtained a conveyance and drove to Dr. Kayser's. The poor old man showed me Gretchen's grave, and delivered her last message. 'Tell him the slanderer was revealed to me, and I know my friend to be true and noble. I should like to live to see him again, but it may not be.'

"The girl had died of acute pulmonary disease. It may be that my encounter with the Englishman, and the truth concerning him, which she had somehow learned, and her remorse in reflecting upon the connection betwixt her cold reception of me and the quarrel that followed, hastened her death. I do not know, but I have added that to my account against that man.

"He had left Germany before I was able to walk. I went to America soon after. Since that time I have set one object before my eyes. I have studied the art of fighting with all known weapons, and with the small-sword I think I am invulnerable. I long for the time to come when he and I can meet once more — for he thinks he is a peerless sworder—and with no possibility of interruption, to try that experiment over again. He forced upon me that former encounter, knowing that I was at his mercy, and he tried to kill me. I have followed him from place to place in the last year, studying his habits and character, and I know him to be dishonest, untruthful and cruel. He is a blot on the surface of society, and I intend to wipe him off."

"I am greatly interested, Mr. Clinton, and greatly shocked," said Mrs. Wailes. "Do I know the man?"

"Yes, madam."

"Who is he?"

"Radcliffe Merton."

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CHAPTER XXXV.

A Change of Purpose.

They rode along in silence after Clinton's last announcement. He was so evidently suppressing strong excitement that Mrs. Wailes prudently concluded to give him time to grow calmer before renewing the discourse. She also was greatly moved by his recital, and impressed by the earnestness and candor of his manner. That he was in dead earnest in his hostility she did not doubt, and the prominent thought in the good lady's mind was to prevent these headstrong and passionate boys from doing deadly harm to each other.

"You have told me too much, Mr. Clinton," she said at length, "or not enough."

"I will answer any question you ask, madam," he replied.

"My son was the other Englishman you spoke of?"

"Yes. He did not know of the quarrel until it was all over. He came to see me before he left Göttingen, and was kind and considerate."

"Why has he not told me that you were acquainted in Germany?"

"I requested him to keep my secret. My name is changed, and I did not wish Merton to hear that Stratton was in the neighborhood. I am not quite ready. My uncle's name was Clinton, and his will required me to take his name."

"Have you met Radcliffe before?"

"I have seen him frequently in Berlin, Paris, London, and Gloucester. He has not seen me until to-night."

"Do you think he recognised you?"

"Oh yes; I am sure of it. His gentle eyes said plainly, 'I know you.'"

"And what did yours reply?" said Mrs. Wailes, laughing in spite of herself.

"I think mine said, 'We will try that little passage over again.' That is what I thought."

"I must talk to you as I would to Trump; may I?"

"Oh, madam, if I could only make you know with what filial reverence I regard you, you would not ask."

"Well, then let me tell you first that you are harboring wicked thoughts and purposes. You are a murderer in intent so long as you look forward to another encounter. Even if your anger against Rad-

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cliffe is just, your purpose to wreak your vengeance upon him is infinitely wicked. I am inclined to think that he has grievously injured you, yet you can never punish him except by direct robbery."

"You astound me, madam! Robbery!" said he, aghast.

"Yes; robbery of God, whose prerogative it is to take vengeance. Have you never been taught that forgiveness is a virtue? Have you never heard of an authoritative law which says 'Thou shalt not kill'? I think too well of you not to believe that the accomplishment of your design would fill your life with remorse. How could you sleep with Radcliffe Merton's blood on your hand?"

"You do not see my blood on *his* hand!" answered Clinton, passionately. "You have known him from boyhood, and he has grown up with your son, and all your sympathies are on his side."

"That is only partly true. I sympathise with you very heartily. I think Radcliffe has acted wickedly; nay, I fear he is as murderous in his feelings as you are in yours. I also saw the expression in his eyes to-night. It may be that he is even worse than you have painted him; but he is so much the more an object of pity, so much the more entitled to forgiveness. Did you ever think that redemption is something provided for *sinners?*"

"I cannot answer you, Mrs. Wailes," said Clinton, thoughtfully. "I cannot endure the thought of deceiving you; yet I cannot so easily forego this — this vengeance. Indeed there must needs be a perpetual antagonism between us. What should I do if he were to assail me?"

"That is not likely to occur. If you avoid him, he will not seek you."

"Do not believe it, madam. I am thwarting some of his most cherished schemes. I heard that he was to marry a gentle girl, his cousin. I got Sir Henry Walton to introduce me to the Squire for the express purpose of preventing so horrible an outrage, and I believe I shall succeed. Oh, Mrs. Wailes, would you be willing to see Sybil marry that cur?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Wailes, hesitating. "I have almost concluded that the match would be very unsuitable. They are cousins too."

"Alas, yes," said Clinton.

"But I object to your complimentary speeches; you should not call Radcliffe a cur. If you indulge in such speeches, and especially if you cultivate the spirit that induces them, you will be certain to come to blows anon. I might not object so strongly to a little fight

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with nature's weapons, if you *must* fight; but the deliberate preparation for an encounter with deadly tools is hideous in its wickedness. I cannot understand how men can do it under any provocation. To kill men in the heat of battle in defence of hearthstone and kindred would seem a terrible evil; but to kill without dire necessity, without the excuse of sudden provocation, seems to me awful in conception and consequence."

"What would you have me do, madam?" said Clinton, subdued and shaken.

"Poor boy!" said Mrs. Wailes, compassionately; "I would have you consider the simple principles of Christianity. No system of ethics that men or angels could invent would so exactly meet all exigencies as the law of universal charity. Is it hard to forgive? then forgiveness is worthy of your manhood. Did you ever hear of one who was forgiven a debt of many talents, yet who refused to forgive a debt of a few pence?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Clinton, submissively, "I have heard."

"Do you think you can cast out the devil of revenge that has possessed you so long? Who are the people who delight in nursing the memory of wrongs until they are atoned for by blood? Your Spaniard or Italian — the members of nationalities which you hold in contempt. 'Vendetta!' that is the word they boastfully use. Or your wild Indian, scalp-hunting — distinguished for nothing so much as for his insatiable thirst for blood. Wherein do you cultivated gentlemen differ from the savage when you confront one another with murderous intent?"

"All that you say is wise and good," said Clinton, "but there is a heap of things you don't mention."

"Select some from the heap," replied Mrs. Wailes, laughing again, "and let us discuss them."

"Well then, if I fail to settle with this — man, he will go scot-free."

"How do you know that?"

"Why, no one else is acquainted with his record."

"I think you are mistaken. I am sure there is One fully acquainted with all his wrongdoing, and who makes allowance for extenuations — such as early training, inherited faults, the force of temptations and the like. And if vengeance must fall upon his guilty head, He has said 'Vengeance is mine: I will repay.'"

"If you keep hitting a fellow with arguments of that sort," said Clinton, discontentedly, "there is no use in debating the point. It is very nice and pious to hug Rad Merton, but I'll be — that is — I can't do it!"

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"What were you going to say you'd be?"

"I had almost said I'd be dog-ond," answered Clinton, humbly.

"I thought it must be something very bad. Is that American swearing?"

"I believe so, ma'am. I learned it from Memnon."

Mrs. Wailes had been studying the "Meditations" that morning, and she proceeded with her discourse, quoting liberally, without giving quotation marks.

"There can be no doubt," she continued, "that man fights his brother man in obedience to an instinct of his nature. Self-defence cannot be wrong *per se*, as one is bound to preserve his life, even at the risk of the life of his assailant. And no native instinct can be wrong *per se*, but must become evil by being deflected from the purpose of its creation. Habits cannot grow into instincts, neither can instincts be formed upon principle. They must be spontaneous, and they are always inherently good and wise.

"But all personal contests that proceed upon arrangement betwixt two, as in duels, are both wicked and foolish. They are bad, because they infringe the divine prerogative. None but the Lord of life, or one who represents Him, as the minister of law, can take away human life guiltlessly, with the solitary exception noted when the necessity of self-defence may be pleaded. They are bad also, because they seek to inflict extreme penalty, without perfect knowledge of extenuations that might modify the sentence. Suppose, for example, that the man who has done you serious injury, the most serious you can imagine, has inherited from brutal ancestors brutal proclivities; suppose these inherited tendencies have been strengthened by his life-training, by perpetual evil example, by encouragement from those he reveres the most, and by the total absence of contrary influences: surely there is some allowance due, and pity should modify anger in such a case. If you say the good of society demands the extermination of such a monster, you have not been appointed the slaughterman of society. Of old these officers were appointed by royal authority. They are bad again because the appearance of equality sought to be established by the selection of equal weapons is a mere pretence, as the duellist seeks by diligent practice to perfect himself in the use of the weapon, and expects to conquer by superior skill or strength. Very few men have engaged in duels without some expectation of success based upon their secret consciousness of advantage in training, in nerve, or in something not known to their antagonist. The show of equality is usually a sham, and all shams are wicked.

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"Or such encounters are especially foolish if there is no advantage, suspected or known; because he who places his own life in jeopardy, relying upon blind chance, is really an atheist or a heathen. The prevalence of law in the wide domain of nature, manifest to any rational observer, must dethrone this idol god chance. And as there are no dual identities in the universe, there cannot be an encounter upon precisely equal terms. Or if the duellist, deeply wronged, tries the combat, as of old relying upon God to defend the right, he makes an appeal to Divine Providence at the very moment that he violates Divine law, which is an absurdity. Or if in obedience to the dictum of a clique or a society he voluntarily faces the weapon of a man more skilful than himself, simply because he is a villain and has injured him, thus inviting death, he is simply a suicide and an ass.

"Here then is the conclusion. If you are confident in your skill, your trick of fence, your quick aim or steady hand, you do not give the poor mortal who confronts your weapon an equal chance, and you are a murderer in the eye of Heaven and in the judgment of sound reason.

"Or if you think some fortuitous circumstance beyond the control of yourself or your adversary will bring about the result, you are relying upon an agency similar to that which decides the fall of the ball in roulette, and placing your life in jeopardy upon the turn of a die. The assassin who takes his enemy at unawares is more wise and logical than you, and less foolhardy."

Clinton was stunned. The previous pious arguments of Mrs. Wailes had made but little impression upon him, but these harsh forms of logic, flowing from her so smoothly and melodiously, and with such evident tenderness of feeling, affected him in spite of his dogged determination. He was conscious of his calm reliance upon extraordinary skill earned by months of patient study and practice, and he felt the blood rushing to his cheek and brow as he thought of the meanness of pretending an equality that he knew did not exist.

"I cannot answer you to-night," he said at last. "I have never been talked to in this fashion before; I must think a little."

"I will give you a subject for meditation. Try to think of this man as repentant, remorseful, and see if you can feel kindly towards him as you do to others of your acquaintance."

The ponies trotted along the smooth road, a mile at least, before Clinton answered. He tried to think of his enemy as repentant, and as he expressed it, humanised, but he was constantly baffled in the effort. There would come into his mind a baleful gleam from the

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lead-colored eyes that mocked the thought of reformation. He tried to imagine an intercourse with Radcliffe, as with other men with whom he held friendly relations — Wailes for example — and there was something so grotesque in the idea that he laughed aloud.

"I can certainly never like Mr. Merton," he said; "I may learn to regard him with indifference perhaps. I think I can forgive the past. It is the relinquishment of a purpose that has colcred all my later life. But I cannot resist the appeals you make, and I begin to believe that my purpose was wicked. Do not judge me harshly, I pray you, madam. As I have learned so much of this man's badness, I thought fate — Providence, I mean — had ordained that I should punish him. Perhaps this was presumption; and in my new repentance I am eager to take one step away from all this evil. Therefore take my promise. I will not pursue this man any longer; I will not recall his past history; I will not quarrel with him upon any pretext, unless —"

"Unless what?"

"Unless he force me, either by some new villainy or by purposely raking up the dead past. Will it content you if I promise to avoid all occasion of offence, and to refuse all invitations to a renewal of our contest, if they should come from him?"

"And suppose you cannot escape a conflict?"

"Then," said Clinton, slowly, "I promise to spare him. His life would surely be in my hands if he forced me to an encounter with deadly weapons. I seem to see such an encounter, inevitable somewhere in the future; and from this hour I set before my mind the inflexible purpose to spare him. You may trust me."

"I do trust you. Give me your hand on it. My friend, you will be all the happier to know how much you comfort me. I have been filled with horror in the contemplation of the evils you have only hinted; but you have set my mind at ease. And now about Sybil."

"Sybil!" stammered Clinton.

"Yes, Sybil. Suppose she should have sufficient influence with Radcliffe to turn him away from evil, would you interpose any obstacle to so good a work?"

"I — I am not sure that I understand you."

"But *I* am sure that you do. If there is any hope for Radcliffe Merton, it is in the constant and controlling influence of a good woman."

"Is there no other good woman in the world," said Clinton, "that you must select this poor girl? Besides, I have told her of several of his tricks."

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"I am ashamed of you, sir!" said Mrs. Wailes, indignantly.

"I mean I have told her of the tricks without telling the name of the trickster. I had reserved that. My dear madam, I did it deliberately, because this was the first avenue through which I hoped to damage him; but I will let it end there. I will not tell her who the monster is that I have described to her. Nay, I will not even tell *you* the ugly details of his last adventures. You see how the purpose to forgive carries with it the desire to condone. Verily I feel more light-hearted and happy than ever before in my life. Can it be possible that my discontent hitherto grew out of my wicked anticipations?"

"No doubt," said Mrs. Wailes.

"Then the better mood comes from the better purposes?"

"Partly. Do I understand you to say you could consent to Sybil's marriage with Radcliffe?"

"Oh! Well, ma'am, if she preferred him to all others, yes."

"You have flirted a little with her, I suppose. Did you do it merely to thwart Radcliffe?"

"I began in that way," answered Clinton, with some hesitation, "but I found Miss Sybil very attractive, and —"

"And you flirted pleasantly enough until you met a lovelier face?"

Clinton started.

"You have gone into the conundrum business again, Mrs. Wailes."

"Have I? Well, I mean Miss Grahame. As you could not guess the conundrum, I have told it. I thought you took a very absorbing interest in Miss Grahame to-night."

"My dear Mrs. Wailes," said Clinton, "there is no help for it. You will have to listen to another story."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Travelling Companions.

Trumpley had thirty-five minutes to spare at Charing Cross station. He secured a return ticket to Paris, ordered breakfast, and while it was "in cooking," refreshed himself with a bath. He had slept an hour or two through the night, and as the smoke of London receded and the green fields spread around on either side of his train, flying

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towards the coast, he felt that returning tide of energy and spirit wherewith happy youth always beats back the assaults of evil fortune. There was a dull pain in his bosom, where a little curl of glossy hair reposed. He had been in the habit of greeting this fragment of humanity with a kiss each morning, and to-day he had neglected this ceremony. There was a vague suspicion in his thought that he had no right to the customary salutation, and therefore he refrained. It may be that the ringlet resented the omission, and by some occult power shot magnetic arrows into the heart of its former worshipper; or perhaps the pain he felt was the natural penalty of *quasi* fetichism about to be renounced. He did not throw the tress away; possibly, as he traced his pain to the person of the idol from whom he had stolen it, he might have been deterred by the proverb that ascribes healing virtue to the hair of the foe that inflicts the wound. This, however, is the author's conceit, not Trump's, and the author blushes in suggesting it.

Wailes had a retentive memory. Compelling himself to think closely and steadily upon the important business in hand, he remembered certain inaccuracies in the recent correspondence with Blauvelt and Zimmermann which were explained by the impending catastrophe. There had been some bills from that house a week before that had to be returned on account of some informality. He remembered the letter of apology that he had written. By-the-bye, the bills purported to be drawn by Delisle of Paris, and only yesterday there was a queer letter from Delisle asking some questions about bills from Berlin. This letter Mr. Grippe had answered himself, sealing up his reply, so that Trumpley did not see the contents. It looked like Delisle had suspicions too. It was a complicated case altogether, and Mr. Grippe had not "hampered" him with instructions. "Be cool, cautious, watchful and prompt." This was all; and this was enough if he only knew the initial steps.

Arrived at Dover, he went aboard the little steamer, while the other passengers, encumbered with luggage, were clamoring on the dock. In due time all was arranged, and the boat started on her twenty miles of rough water. The last passenger leaped on board as the gangway was withdrawn, and came directly to the upper deck, where Wailes was seated. It was Radcliffe.

"Hillo, Trump!" said he. "I thought you had missed the train at Gloucester. How the deuce did you manage to catch it?"

"By fast walking," answered Wailes.

"I drove rapidly when I learned of your mishap on the road, hoping to overtake you. I got the train by the skin of my teeth."

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"I had the start of you," said Trump. "Are you going to Paris?"

"Of course. And you?"

"Yes."

"Shall you be there long? You must come to the Hotel Meurice. Is it a pleasure-trip you are taking?"

Better not tell Rad anything; business secrets are sacred. "I cannot say how long. Hotel Meurice? Oh, no; I am going to Madame Ramor, Rue St. Honoré. There is quite a difference in the matter of outlay, you know, and I am practising economy."

"Talking of economy, do you know that Yankee swell that has taken Beechwood — Clifton, or some such name?"

"Clinton. Yes; he brought letters to our bank."

"Did you ever know him before?" said Radcliffe, very carelessly.

"Yes," replied Wailes; "but he requested me not to refer to the past, so I have not mentioned it even to Mother."

Direct honesty, the exact truth; nothing withheld, nothing colored. This sort of answer disarmed Radcliffe.

"I recognised him, Trump," said he, "and I have been thinking hard things of you ever since. It is Stratton, curse him! the same Yankee that I spitted at Göttingen. He has been poking about the Continent for a year or two. I found some one was interfering with my plans once or twice, but could not discover him. I understand it now. Has he said anything to you about me?"

"Nothing."

"Well, we know he is an impostor to a certain extent. He is travelling under false colors; he bears an assumed name. I shall write to Uncle Matt and warn him.'

"You are in error," said Trumpley, quietly; "his name has been legally changed. We have the papers at the bank. He is endorsed everywhere by Sir Henry Walton as a gentleman of station, and he is certainly as rich as he pretends to be. Moreover, Rad, your dislike of him is ridiculous, and your suspicions unfounded. I find him a thorough good fellow. Why should you remember that foolish quarrel in Germany? He certainly got the worst of it then."

"We will try that over, perhaps," said Radcliffe.

"Better not," said Trump, laughing; "he is a master of fence now. I wasted an hour endeavoring to get the better of him only a few weeks ago. If I do not mistake, I rather dressed *you* at our last encounter; but Clinton was positively invulnerable."

"Did he get the better of you?" said Radcliffe.

"I don't think he tried. He did not touch me, though. When I get back I may — no, I won't."

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"Are you going to do any business in Paris?" said Radcliffe, suddenly, after the pause that succeeded Trump's last remark.

"I shall probably call on our correspondents there. How this horrible little tub pitches! The poor voyagers below there are getting blue. Let us smoke, Rad."

Something wrong about Trump. This is the second time that he evaded the inquiry about business. Does the young jackanapes think himself so important as the representative of Browler Brothers that he cannot answer a civil question? He looks important. What can be up now? It must be something out of the common run of events, or he would be apt to gabble. If he would only get slightly sea-sick, one could pop a sudden question, and he is not able to lie out of a corner. Where in the world did he get these cigars?

"Where did you get these cigars, Trump?"

"Do you like them?" said Trump, reflecting.

"Yes. They are like those Mr. Grippe had last night."

"They are the same, I suppose; Mr. Grippe gave me a few. His smoking is confined to some poisonous cigarettes."

"Do you correspond with Blauvelt and Zimmermann?"

"You mean the bank?" said Trumpley.

"Certainly."

"Ah, then I cannot answer you. Mr. Grippe has a supply of maxims which he has taught me. Number one is: 'Never tell anything about your business, no matter how unimportant it may be.' It seems to me that it is a very sensible rule; one never knows."

This was pleasant. The young cub is actually delivering a sort of moral lecture to a practised man of the world; and he looks so composed and wise. "One never knows!" That implies the possibility of his interlocutor making a bad use of the information. Is it only his old-fashioned oddity in stickling about trifles for the sake of principle, or is he really suspicious?

"Blauvelt of that firm," said Radcliffe, "is our old French tutor."

"Indeed?" said Trumpley, indifferently.

"Man of first-rate abilities," continued Rad, "but inclined to be sharp, I fancy. There is Calais. Those poor beggars below there are having a jolly time. Look how blue that fellow's gills are. I believe I'll offer him a cigar, just to tantalise him."

"For shame, Rad!" said Wailes; "the man is evidently suffering. Let him alone; we are getting into smoother water now. What luggage have you?"

"None; at least it is booked for Paris. You have a portmanteau,

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I suppose. I saw Podd at the scene of your catastrophe, and he said you had lugged it off yourself."

"Yes, I did. You see I had to travel rapidly. Rad, we ought to offer our services to some of those feeble women. Come on."

"Not I."

"Well, I must. There is an old lady with two satchels — come on. You may wait upon the younger one."

"Can't do it, Trump. Saw them coming out of second-class carriage. Better not get mixed up with that lot."

"Don't be such a selfish old wretch; come on. They are getting ready to land. It is only to help them over the gangway and get them to the train. The young woman is quite pretty. Come on."

"You are welcome to them both, Trump; I am going to look for a place in a smoking-carriage. Here goes."

While Mr. Merton coolly threaded his way through the crowd of passengers, Wailes took the older woman's satchels, and assisted her across the narrow gangway. Two sharp-eyed French officials stood, one on either side of the landing, but gave them passage. The train was near, and they were soon seated. Radcliffe, who had preceded them, was nowhere visible, and Trumpley took his place in the same carriage with the ladies he had escorted. They were in the second-class compartment.

"We go to Boulogne, Monsieur," said the younger, after expressing her thanks in a mixture of German and French.

"Ach! yes," said the elder; "we have there to meet my daughter's husband. Does Monsieur know Boulogne?"

"I have been there," replied Wailes. "What is the address?"

"Monsieur Jules Blauvelt, Hotel du Nord," answered the old lady, reading the address in a letter which she took from her pocket.

"Why, that is my friend," thought Trumpley; "possibly I may not have to visit Berlin after all."

"Ach!" continued the old lady, reading and translating into French as she proceeded, "'Hotel du Nord, Boulogne; await arrival. Come on Wednesday. Get return tickets.'"

"Mother," said the other, in German, "we should not talk."

"I speak German," said Wailes quickly in that tongue. "As you ladies are comfortably seated, I will seek my friend. Boulogne is the first station, I think." So saying, he gathered up his rug and left the carriage, walking along the platform until he found a vacant compartment in a first-class carriage. The guard closed the door behind him.

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"Is Monsieur alone?" he said.

"Yes," said Trump, giving him a franc. "One may smoke here?"

"Perfectly," answered the official, and a moment later the train moved out of the station.

"This is my third to-day," thought Trump, as he lighted his cigar. "I must economise; Mr. Grippe gave me a dozen, and they are half gone. Ah, Monsieur Blauvelt, what trick are you up to now? Perhaps the solitary smoke will stimulate my thinking powers. I must find some satisfactory solution of this mystery. Shall I go to Berlin or not?"

Thinking with enormous vigor, Wailes finished his cigar. Still thinking, he fell asleep. Once the guard wakened him and took his ticket, but he was asleep again in two minutes. Then he saw Mabel, and though the shadows were lengthening over the dreary landscape, he could see the color of her eyes. They were very peculiar eyes — very deep blue. She came nearer to him, and putting her hand on his shoulder, shook him gently. He started up amazed.

"Paris, Monsieur!" said the guard.

Still dreaming, and wondering at the twilight, he got out of the carriage and followed the throng passing to the luggage-room. Then he remembered that he had no luggage — yes, a rug. He had left it in the carriage, and must go back. Fortunately he met the guard, to whom he made his mishap known. In a trice the carriage was found, and the rug also. Another stream of passengers passing down the platform, taking their places in an outgoing train. There was Radcliffe, bidding adieu to a tall gentleman with a magnificent moustache. The tall gentleman entered a carriage, and with his hat pulled down over his eyes, his rug on his shoulder, Mr. Wailes followed him and took his place in the same compartment. He had "done" Paris.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A Transfer.

The author hopes Mr. Trumpley Wailes' claim to oddity is established. He had been travelling eighteen hours, eager to reach the world's capital. In his dreams of violet eyes there had been mingled sundry visions of meat and bread and beer; for he was young and

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full of health, and the prospect of a dinner in the Rue St. Honoré was the most enlivening prospect before him when he was hunting the lost rug. That he should suddenly abandon the feast and take the return train for Calais, attracted by a moustache of extraordinary proportions, was certainly an odd procedure. If Radcliffe had seen him he would have thought so; if his present *compagnon de voyage* had known his thoughts, he would have been certain of the fact.

Hunger was gnawing at his vitals. Leaning out the window, he accosted a porter passing down the platform.

"My friend," he said, "is it possible to get bread and meat before the train leaves?"

"If Monsieur will step to the buffet. There is time."

"Alas! I cannot quit my seat; but I will pay five francs for bread, meat, and a bottle of English beer."

The porter darted across the rails like an arrow, and returned in two minutes with enough sandwiches to sustain a moderate family a day or two. He extracted the cork from the bottle, which he passed through the window, receiving the promised coin in return. And while the gentle Trumpley demolished the solids and imbibed the beer, the train passed out of the gaslight and into the darkness of the country. Trump threw the empty bottle at a miserable poplar on the roadside ten miles from Paris, and missed it.

The gentleman in the other corner lighted a cigarette, and thus encouraged, Wailes lighted a cigar. He felt very placid and comfortable, and he resolved to meditate silently until they passed Amiens. Then it occurred to him that there might be a branch-road at Amiens, and if he made the acquaintance of his companion he had better begin. There was a lamp in the roof of the car, lighting the compartment dimly, but luminous enough to enable Wailes to study the exterior of the quiet figure in the corner.

Rather tall, probably six feet; wiry-looking; face sallow; eyes hidden by his hat-brim; a long thin nose, a little hooked, and under it a silken black moustache covering his mouth entirely. He looked very strong and rather wicked. Trump felt his pulses accelerated, and laid his hand on his breast to feel the thumping at his ribs. What is this? Clinton's revolver. He had thrust it into his bosom twenty hours ago, and had not thought of it since, except when he undressed for his bath in London. Somehow his pulses grew calmer when he drew it out and placed it by his side on the cushioned seat.

"Mr. Grippe said only two things to me," thought Wailes. "First, he told me to act in this emergency as I would act if the money were

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my own. Well, it is clear that I should try to reclaim it if I had lost it. Second, he exhorted me to be cool, cautious, watchful and prompt. Well, I feel cool. This murderous little weapon under my hand makes me more than a match for the rascal in the corner. Cautious? By all means! I will select my words most carefully when I open the conversation. How quiet and strong he looks! Watchful? I think I have been reasonably watchful thus far. What are the probabilities? Let me consider.

"Blauvelt forged those bills. No use to debate that point. The bill we sent him was payable in Paris and mailed to his Paris agent. He has the money in his pocket without doubt, and my duty is clearly to effect the transfer of the amount he stole to mine. He is going to Boulogne, intending to join his wife, and will probably go thence to Havre and take ship for Clinton's country. Or he may be bold enough to go to London and effect his exchanges there. In either case it would be perilous to let this opportunity slip.

"What will he do when I make my demand? Fight? Certainly! Then I must disable him. I will shoot him in the legs when he rises. I shall be arrested of course, but he will be arrested also; and while the trial is pending I can telegraph for Mr. Grippe. Blauvelt cannot get away with the money, at least. What a hornet's nest the rascal will stir up if he loses his temper! I must be careful not to lose mine. If I shoot, I must hit him in the thigh, I suppose; and should that fail, I will put in the second shot a little higher. I wonder if he has any offensive weapons? Very likely.

"Prompt? Of course. This is one of those cases where prompt action counts. I saw a couple of gens-d'armes get into the next compartment. If there is any powder burnt in this, they will be in here in a jiffy. I certainly can't miss his legs at this distance. But I did not hit the tree with that bottle; I was not cautious enough. Now for it!

"Mr. Blauvelt," he said aloud, "I salute you."

"Ma foi!" replied Mr. Blauvelt, "it is ze Odd Tromp!"

"Exactly," said Wailes, passing into French. "I hope Monsieur is well."

"Very well. I thought you were in Paris."

"Ah, Mr. Merton told you. I was on my way to Berlin to visit you, but seeing you enter this carriage, I followed. It was fortunate."

Monsieur Blauvelt made a wry face. He looked intently at Wailes, but made no reply.

"Mr. Merton no doubt informed Monsieur that I have the honor to represent Messieurs Browler Brothers?"

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Monsieur Blauvelt maintained a discreet silence. The meat and bread, to say nothing of the beer, had invigorated Mr. Wailes' body, and his mind worked smoothly and rapidly.

"There were certain inaccuracies in our later correspondence, Monsieur — especially in yesterday's transactions. Our house remitted yours fifteen thousand two hundred pounds in a bill on Delisle. The bill was mailed to your Paris agent, and should have arrived twelve hours ago. Without doubt, Monsieur has received the bill and obtained the money."

Monsieur was not deaf, only dumb. Trumpley continued his address.

"If Monsieur secured the money to-day then, it is probable that he has it with him; and having it here, the little transfer I hoped to arrange in Berlin can be arranged immediately. We shall reach Amiens within an hour or two; in the meantime I shall receive the fifteen thousand two hundred pounds from Monsieur, with ten pounds additional for expenses incurred in this journey."

Monsieur might as well have been dead, except that his eyes glittered with a gleam that was very life-like.

"Because," continued the orator, "I regret to inform Monsieur that the bills he sent us were forged. I beg Monsieur to remain seated; if he should rise, an accident would happen." And Wailes took up the revolver and cocked it. There was a crisp accent in the click of the lock that was impressive.

"I thought I would be obliged to injure Monsieur," said Wailes, resuming the thread of his discourse; "and indeed there is but a hair's-breadth between him and a very serious injury now. If I am compelled to fire upon Monsieur, I shall endeavor to disable him without killing him. As Monsieur has known me some years, he will do me the honor to believe me."

"What will you have?" said Blauvelt, finding his voice.

"Fifteen thousand two hundred and ten pounds, if Monsieur pleases," answered Wailes.

"You are mad!" said the Belgian, coldly; "you need not be told that I have no such sum of money upon my person. Men do not travel with such amounts in their pockets. Even if your absurd claim were just, no settlement could be made in a railway carriage. If I were weak enough to be frightened by your bombastic display of a pistol, and should pay money to you under its muzzle, do you not know that such transfer would be illegal? Bah! Put away that toy, and let us discuss the question like men; we are not *both* boys."

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"Let us proceed regularly," said Trump, with exquisite politeness, "and I beg Monsieur to pardon any apparent rudeness in my speech. In the first place, Monsieur *has* the money. In ordinary cases he would doubtless send it by post, in the form of bills upon other cities; but this case is urgent, and the circumstances peculiar. The forgery will not be formally announced for two days, and in two days there are forty-eight hours. Monsieur could easily so employ those forty-eight hours as to postpone the settlement I desire — indefinitely. If it is delayed until the train reach Amiens, and if no accident occur in the meantime in handling this dangerous toy, I shall request the two gens-d'armes in the next carriage to wait upon Monsieur until I can get my credentials from Paris or London. Whereas, should Monsieur kindly grant my request, and make the transfer at once, he may proceed to Boulogne, where Madame anxiously waits his arrival, at the Hotel du Nord."

Blauvelt glared at the bold speaker in mute astonishment.

"Madame her mother is with her. They have return-tickets to London. Monsieur cannot stop at Boulogne to-night if the gens-d'armes wait upon him. They will probably wish to remain at Amiens."

Under the feeble light of the lamp in the ceiling, the sallow face of the Belgian seemed to grow green. His eyes were full of ferocity, mingled with terror aroused by the last words of his persecutor. How much did he know? He thought twenty times that he would throw himself suddenly upon Wailes and risk everything in a desperate struggle. But the pistol-barrel was in a line with his body, the hammer drawn back, and Trump's finger was on the trigger. And while there was no pretence in the polite manner of the youth, his tones were even and unembarrassed, and cold as ice. No anger, no trepidation, no excitement, but a desperate tenacity, an accent of stern inflexibility that awed the practised villain far more than any amount of rage and bluster would have done. The handsome face of the Englishman was like the marble bust of Antinous in the Hotel de Cluny, and the resemblance actually struck Blauvelt in the midst of his confusion and dismay.

"Suppose I should be able to satisfy you; is the return of the fifteen thousand all your demand?"

"Fifteen thousand two hundred and ten pounds," said Wailes; "no more and no less."

"Word of honor?" said Blauvelt.

"Word of honor," responded Wailes.

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"And you promise to leave me totally free? Nay, you must promise to keep silent about this encounter—"

"Listen, Monsieur," said Wailes; "when I get this money I shall return directly to Gloucester. It will be afternoon to-morrow. Then I shall tell Mr. Grippe. This is all that I can do, and I hope you will not make any more stipulations. At present I have only suspicions; if you turn my suspicions into certainties it will be my duty to act. With my present knowledge I shall be silent until I reach Gloucester."

Mr. Blauvelt took a pocket-book from his breast, and selecting a paper, presented it to Wailes, who received it with his left hand, while his right held the objectionable toy rigidly in position.

"That is Delisle's acceptance of your own bill," said Blauvelt; "you perceive he has directed his London correspondent to pay the amount in sterling, fifteen thousand two hundred pounds."

Trumpley examined the paper carefully. It was the very bill he had enclosed in his letter to Blauvelt and Zimmermann on the previous day, and bore his own initials in the corner. Across the face was written Delisle's acceptance, and the order of transfer upon the London bankers. He folded the paper and placed it in his pocket.

"When we reach Amiens," he said, "I must trouble Monsieur to endorse the bill to Browler Brothers. It is payable to the order of Blauvelt and Zimmermann. I will trouble Monsieur for the other ten pounds at same time; and I beg that Monsieur will not injure his excellent teeth by grinding them in that unpleasant manner. We shall find pen and ink in the waiting-room. Probably Monsieur will take the train thence to Boulogne. May I venture to offer Monsieur a cigar? No?"

While the throng of passengers were flitting from buffet to waiting-room and booking-office at Amiens, Mr. Blauvelt obtained writing materials, and made the needful endorsement upon the bill. He also politely handed Wailes ten sovereigns, declining his offer to write a formal acknowledgment. Trumpley resumed his seat, but Mr. Blauvelt disappeared; and when Trumpley was tossing on the short waves of the Channel, under the moonlight, Mr. Blauvelt was enacting the *rôle* of the average married-man of fiction, at the Hotel du Nord, Boulogne, to wit: cursing his mother-in-law.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Too Late.

The events recorded in the preceding chapter would be out of the common order if one or two apparently trivial circumstances did not account for them. Mr. Clinton, in conversation with the banker, had casually mentioned Blauvelt and Zimmermann, whereupon Mr. Grippe remarked that some large transactions had recently brought the Berlin firm into correspondence with him. Then Mr. Clinton politely hoped Mr. Grippe was secure in the transactions, which of course had the effect to make that gentleman feel quite insecure, as Clinton suggested some suspicion of Blauvelt's honesty. And when Trumpley came out upon the South Terrace, Clinton overheard the banker mention Blauvelt's name. As he knew the Belgian was truculent and unscrupulous, and supposing Wailes was going to meet him, he had insisted so earnestly upon arming his friend that Trump promised to take the weapon to get rid of his importunity, and Trump always kept his promises.

The other events happened in ordinary sequence. Mr. Wailes, taking compassion on an elderly female encumbered with luggage, had assisted her to the train, and she revealed enough of Mr. Blauvelt's plans to make the youth act with more decision in the crisis; and the oddity of his character was manifested in the cold precision of his utterances under circumstances calculated to produce high excitement, and in the sublime courage that carried him scathless through an encounter of deadly peril. The Belgian was armed, and he would have killed Wailes without hesitation if he could have done it safely. But the stronger nature prevailed, as Blauvelt recognised under the polished manner and soft intonations of the Englishman a purpose as relentless as death.

When Trumpley arrived at Gloucester, he went directly to the bank. Mr. Grippe was at Halidon. James was waiting for the mail, having driven to the city in the spring-cart, now laden with sundry parcels for the 'ouse. Wailes took a seat by his side, and stopping to reclaim his portmanteau, safely reposing under the hedge, drove down with him to the banker's residence. Mr. Grippe was in his room with a real attack of asthma, but begged Mr. Wailes to walk up. The ladies were invisible.

The banker was sitting astride of a chair, a pillow on the back, and

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his chest resting upon it. This was a veritable attack, and the old gentleman was evidently uncomfortable.

"Take a seat, Mr. Wailes," he said. "I feel as if I were getting my breath through a tube forty feet long."

"I am very sorry to see you in such distress, sir," said Wailes. "Perhaps I have done wrong in coming, but I was anxious—"

"To tell me of your failure! Never mind; it was a desperate case."

"No, sir," answered Trump, producing his pocket-book; "I think I have not failed. Here is your bill for fifteen thousand—"

"What the devil—excuse me!" spluttered Mr. Grippe, taking the bill and examining it eagerly. "Accepted by Delisle and made payable in London!"

"Yes, sir. It is addressed to our own correspondents. I had time to get the London acceptance. It only wants your signature to complete the transfer."

"Sit down. I feel better. Tell me the whole story; it is most extraordinary."

"Would it not be better to wait until to-morrow, sir?" said Wailes, slyly. "Business talk will excite you and bring on another attack."

"Bring on rubbish! Never was better in my life. Ring the bell, please. James, two bottles of bitter beer, some biscuit and cheese. Here, take away this pillow!" and he threw it at James viciously. That exemplary servant caught it on the fly, placed it soberly on the bed and vanished. Mr. Grippe put on his spectacles and read the famous bill all over, with its various endorsements. James reappeared, drew a table near Mr. Grippe's seat, uncorked the beer and re-vanished.

"Now, Mr. Wailes," said Browler Brothers, "business, please. You can talk while you eat. I am famishing; had no breakfast to-day. The bank has been running itself. Begin!"

"It is a short story, sir."

"I want all the details. Go on."

"I went directly to Paris. It was nearly dark when I arrived. Before I got out at the station I saw Mr. Blauvelt; he was going towards Calais. I followed him and took a seat in the same carriage. We two had the compartment to ourselves as far as Amiens. Before we got there I had persuaded him to return the bill. That is all, sir. Of course I came directly back."

"You are telling me nothing!" said Grippe, irascibly. "I desire to know what you said and what he said."

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"Well, sir," answered Wailes, "I told him the bills he sent were forged —"

"The devil! Excuse me. Go on."

"And therefore I was obliged to request the return of our remittance, fifteen thousand two hundred pounds, and ten pounds more for my expenses."

"Ten pounds more for your expenses," said the banker, as if repeating a lesson. "Pray go on."

"He objected at first. I think he said he had no money with him, and proposed a postponement —"

"Yes; proposed a postponement," repeated Mr. Grippe, with great unction.

"And I was obliged to contradict him, sir, as I was sure he had the money, and I thought a postponement very risky. He became excited — and — I believe he thought of throwing me out the window."

"Well."

"He concluded to return the bill instead. At Amiens we got pen and ink, and he endorsed the bill, as you see. He went to Boulogne, I believe, and I came through, crossing the Channel by the night boat."

"It is important for me to know, Mr. Wailes," said Mr. Grippe, "just what arguments you used with Blauvelt."

"I told him he would get hurt, sir," replied Wailes. "I had to do it. If you will be good enough to be satisfied with this explanation —"

"If *you* will be good enough to tell me *all* that was said and done, perhaps you won't drive me mad, as you are doing!"

"Mr. Clinton insisted on giving me this, sir," said Trumpley, producing the revolver. "I have known Mr. Blauvelt many years, and I was sure he would stop at nothing to silence me; so I — showed him this when he half rose to assault me. I was going to shoot him in the legs. Then I should have been arrested, and he could not run until I telegraphed for you or Delisle."

"Suppose you had been unarmed?" said Mr. Grippe.

"Ah, I have not thought of that. Let me see. Oh, there were police-officers on the train; I should have accused him to them, and stuck by him until Delisle could arrive. I did not know I had the pistol until we were locked in together; I had forgotten it. When I got that in my hand, all the rest was easy. You told me to be cool, cautious, watchful and prompt. I did not forget that."

"Have you had enough beer? Plenty?"

"Yes, sir."

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"Where are you going now."

"Home. There was only one foreign letter to-day. I replied and got Mr. Choppy to sign the answer. It was of no importance. Then as James was coming down, I thought I would come and tell you."

"Yes; you have played the mischief telling me. Look you, Mr. Wailes: one invariable rule in business is, 'No secrets from your partner.' Do you understand?"

"No, sir," said Trump, slightly bewildered.

"I mean to say that you are a partner in the house of Browler Brothers; that is, unless you have other views—"

"Other views! Mr. Grippe, I won't accept this! You overrate this little matter because the amount is large. Please let it rest a week or two—"

"Not an hour!" said the banker, stamping his sound foot vehemently. "Don't you see how feeble I am? The least thing knocks me up, and your opposition will bring on a fine attack, no doubt. If you refuse to do as I say—I'll—I'll quit business! Here, I'll give you an eighth of the profits. It is more than I got at first; and you may draw a hundred pounds a month for the next three years. You must take charge of everything."

"Mr. Grippe, my inexperience—"

"Hang your inexperience! Get out! Ring the bell! James, drive Mr. Wailes home. Don't run another wheel off! Come tell me when the horses are ready. Inexperience! My dear boy, you will comfort my declining years. The cares of that bank are killing me. Inexperience! When you find your experience at fault, you can just draw a pistol, you murdering young vagabond! Get out, I say! Don't answer me. Shake hands. You're a trump, you young villain! Get out; I am going into another spasm!"

"Oh, Mr. Grippe!" said Wailes, with tears in his eyes, "you cannot conceal your kindness by attacks of asthma! I am not worthy of this generous dealing. I will serve you as devotedly as I can, in whatever capacity you please."

"All right. First I want the exact description of that interview with Blauvelt. You must write it down, word for word; do it to-night. Ah! my boy," he continued, his eyes twinkling, "I know something. Do you remember you said there was a *young* woman? Ah! I know. Well. With twelve hundred pounds a year you can hunt up the young woman. I'll help you, you dog.'

"Alas!" said Wailes, "it is too late, too late!"

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"Too late?" said Grippe, pale with rage, "too late? Get out, you miserable, inconstant rascal! Too late? It shall never be too late. I'll turn Guy Fawkes and blow up Halidon before it shall be too late. Do you suppose I will let the labors and plans of twenty years all be blown away by a young booby's sigh? There's the carriage; get out with you! Here! Shake hands again. Never say die, boy. Too late! If I was not dying with asthma, I'd die laughing at you. Too late, indeed! Are you going or not? I'll throw this chair at you if you don't get out, by George!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A Disagreement.

Within the week the new partner was formally inducted, and Mr. Grippe postponed asthma until the wheels of commerce and banking were revolving smoothly, bearing Trumpley on to fortune. He worried that amiable young gentleman nearly to death by turning all manner of business over to him without warning, and requiring instant decisions upon matters involving large outlays, chuckling with high enjoyment over the careworn expression of Trumpley's pleasant countenance.

Two days after the junior was inaugurated, Chunk ushered Mr. Radcliffe Merton into Mr. Wailes' room.

"Hillo, Trump!" said he, vivaciously, "you have taken a step since we parted."

"Yes," said Wailes; "rather unexpectedly to me. When did you come back? I lost you in Calais."

"Last night. That is, I was in London yesterday. I have a financial matter on hand, and want a banker. You shall have your first commission from me. Mr. Grippe refused to discuss matters, and referred me to you."

"Indeed! Business, is it? State your case, sir, I am all attention."

"It is a plain case, Trump," answered Merton, confidently. "I have gone rather heavily into some shares, the Dorado mine, and I require a loan of a few thousands upon them. Here are the certificates. You see the allotment payment is acknowledged, five pounds a share, and the second five pounds will be due in a week. I have

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not quite enough tin on hand, and shall need perhaps three thousand. Perfectly safe, you see. The certificates are for a thousand shares, representing five thousand paid in. You had better go in for some, Trump. I can get you a few at original price; they are selling at fifteen shillings advance, you know."

"Did you mention this to Mr. Grippe?" said Wailes.

"No. He got asthmatic, and said you would do quite as well. In fact he said he had turned over all that part of the business to you."

"Well, Rad," said Trumpley, reluctantly, "I am sorry I cannot make this loan. We have declined these shares before."

"What!" said Radcliffe; "you don't mean to deny me, surely? Does all our friendship count for nothing with you?"

"Business, Rad," answered Wailes; "I am dealing with you as I would with a stranger. I would not lend a stranger a pound a share on this security. I distrust the whole thing. Sell out, Rad. You say there is a premium of fifteen shillings; sell out and stay out."

"You are — demented!" retorted Merton, flushing up; "when this second payment is made the shares will sell for fifteen pounds. I have examined all through it; it is good. I am sure of a good profit if I get this second payment made."

"I am sorry I have no money of my own, Rad," said Wailes; "though if I had I could not help you. One of the conditions of the partnership forbids loans, even of private means, without my partner's consent."

"I should not expect much from your private means," said Radcliffe, rudely; "but you will not be very successful as a banker, I fancy, if you turn away every gentleman with landed estates who applies for accommodation. My own bill at two months ought to be good for three thousand pounds."

"We do not lend money upon land," said Trump, quietly; "if you desire to make that sort of negotiation, there is Mr. Solomons —"

"Many thanks. Really, I did not think your head could be turned so easily! Of course your sudden advancement is calculated to induce conceit, but to set up your judgment of values against able London financiers, who have invested in these shares, is absurd."

"Why not apply to some of them for the loan you want?" replied Wailes. "We do not deal in that description of security here; that is all. Besides, Rad, you are not a customer of the bank, and it would be a violation of an established rule to lend you, even upon consols. It is far more absurd for you to lose your temper, when you know I am obliged to decline this transaction."

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Book XV.

ROUGE-ET-NOIR AT BADEN.

CHAPTER XL.

Maison Rouge.

Three times at least in the foregoing Books the author has been obliged to close a chapter abruptly, and he hopes the reader will remember the places and accept the present effort to repair the damage. The first time was at the end of Chapter VI. in the First Book, where the Reverend Edward Grahame announced that he had a story to tell. That story will be duly recounted with sundry accessories in the following pages. The second lapse occurred at the end of Chapter XXVI. in the Second Book, where a ghost was arrested, and then quietly vanished from the story. In the present book she shall reappear and account for her conduct. The last break in the narrative may be found at the conclusion of Chapter XXXV. in the Third Book, where Mr. Clinton cleared his throat for a recital that promised to be interesting, and where the story left him abruptly. This was done of malice aforethought, and his story strangled in the bud, simply because it was rather too soon for the rêvelations he was about to make. If the reader will be patient and read steadily on without skipping, he will in due time arrive at the last chapter in the last book, and somewhere in the history he will either find Mr. Clinton's story revealed by implication, or shall have it in detail. No more definite promise would be safe, as this gentleman is the most restless and unmanageable character thus far presented.

The Black Forest, which has been the scene of so many delightful blood-curdling legends, stretches down to the very outskirts of Baden,

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and on the edge of the forest a French marquis had erected a red-brick château near a hundred years ago. It was called Maison Rouge. The house had gained an evil reputation, partly on account of the wild lives of its owner and his descendants through two or three generations, and partly because the peasantry were prone to people such mansions with goblins when they were left untenanted by men and women for any prolonged period. Then there had been savage brawls there in the old time when gay nobles carried weapons in their belts, and half-a-dozen mounds back of the château were pointed out as the last resting-places of those who had been worsted in these quarrels. As a matter of course these were unquiet sleepers, reappearing upon anniversaries, and revenging themselves upon modern society by stalking through deserted chambers, exhibiting ghastly wounds in a very disagreeable manner. There was nothing attractive about the place, and it was left to owls, bats and goblins for long seasons, repulsive within and without.

Near a quarter of a century before Trumpley Wailes found the violets in Merton's Brook, Maison Rouge was swept and garnished, and occupied by an English gentleman and his wife. They were evidently in their honeymoon, and were overflowing with happiness. The gentleman was Mr. Harold Trumpley, who had been an annual visitor at Baden for several years, and was therefore familiar with the localities. It was in accordance with his character to select this house, both because of its loneliness and its bad reputation, as he had always been morose and solitary in his habits, and was apparently incapable of fear. The goblins would find their match if they encountered him.

The house was supplied as if for a siege — quantities of provisions, quantities of wines and all other appliances of housekeeping. For a month or two the couple seemed to be content with each other's society; but as Baden filled up with visitors, they gradually came out of their seclusion and mingled with the gay company in the town. Then there came a young clergyman and his invalid wife, who was the sister of Mrs. Trumpley, and they also took up their residence at Maison Rouge. Then there came Captain Merton, a rollicking young sailor, and being an old acquaintance and friend of the ladies, partook of the hospitalities of Mr. Trumpley's house. He had a chamber there always ready for occupation, and he had apartments also at the Hotel d'Angleterre, and he flitted between the two places as the whim seized him.

The Reverend Mr. Grahame and his wife were really the only

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regular occupants of Maison Rouge after the Baden season fairly set in. Mr. Trumpley was a constant attendant at the "tables," where various games were in progress, and where large sums changed hands night after night. Mrs. Trumpley, young and pretty, found many acquaintances among the English visitors. So they also took apartments at the hotel and visited their own house occasionally. Mrs. Grahame was regular in her application to the healing baths, but was never seen at the play-rooms frequented by all the rest of the population. Her husband drove her into town each day in Trumpley's pony-carriage, returning by daylight to Maison Rouge, and leading a very rational life, while his wife gradually improved in health.

Then there came a new sensation with the arrival of Miss Radcliffe, a dashing young English heiress, under charge of an antiquated companion, half-duenna and half-governess. The extent of her fortune could not be accurately ascertained, but it was evidently large enough to make her very attractive to all the impecunious danglers at the watering-place. She would have been positively pretty also but for a peculiarity in the flare of her eyebrows, which gave a feline expression to her face, especially when in one of her "little tempers," which was the name her duenna gave to tolerably frequent ebullitions of passion which she reserved for their private intercourse.

Then there came Monsieur Lamont, a banker from Marseilles. He was one of those smooth-faced Frenchmen that are ever young and blooming. He was affable and polite, spoke English with a charming accent, gambled at rouge-et-noir, and made a succession of small winnings. Once and again he partook of the profuse hospitality of Maison Rouge, and with the assurance of a connoisseur pronounced the red Burgundy there dispensed, the most magnificent wine in Europe. There was a goodly quantity in the cellars, and Monsieur Lamont was so emphatic in his praises that Mr. Trumpley decided to bottle the larger portion of it and ship it to his English home. The banker volunteered to superintend this delicate operation. Everything depended upon the care bestowed in the selection of bottles, corks and wax. Day after day he watched the progress of this important work, lest the precious fluid should by accident moisten the plebeian throats of the workmen. At last it was finished, the wine packed in cases and consigned to Halidon. Monsieur Lamont vowed that he would tear himself away from the entanglements of business, and drink the health of Monsieur and Madame Trumpley beneath their own roof-tree, some time in the coming winter. A case or two

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was consigned to Reverend Edward Grahame, London; and it may as well be recorded here that every drop of this portion found its way into the gin-scalded gullets of sick paupers in Blackfriars. Had Monsieur Lamont known of this terrible waste, he would have torn out his glossy black hair by the handful, which desperate act would have enured to the profit of the wig-makers of Marseilles who were favored with the banker's patronage.

Besides his devotion to Maison Rouge, mansion and wine, Monsieur Lamont had a reason for prolonging his stay. There had arrived at the Hotel d'Angleterre a sickly young Englishman, who pestered the banker with his attentions. This was Mr. Anthony Grippe, from Gloucester, sorely afflicted with asthma, and flying to Monsieur Lamont for sympathy twenty times a day. While the latter remained at Maison Rouge he was secure, as Mr. Grippe was not favored with the entrée to that establishment. But as soon as he returned to Baden the pale-faced Englishman fell upon him, and stuck by him like his shadow. When Lamont was making his little venture at rouge-et-noir, Mr. Grippe was at his elbow, noting down his nightly gains as methodically as if he had been engaged to keep an accurate account of them, and deploring the occasional losses, or "changes of luck," as heartily as if he had been personally interested.

These are the people, selected out of the multitudes that populated Baden and its vicinity, in whom the reader is requested to take some slight interest. It is probable that the experiences of novel-readers are as various as the classes of novels that have afflicted modern society; but it is also probable that all readers object to retrospects. If the narrative has been made interesting up to the point where these backward leaps are taken, it is a constructive fraud in the author if he fails to invest the "previous history" with interest also. And if, on the other hand (alas!), the reader has been wearily counting the pages and longing for the *denoûment*, the writer who can awaken new interest in old stories under such unhappy circumstances, may take a high place in the ranks of fiction-makers.

It may be objected that this back-history should have been recorded first, and then the story would have sailed to the haven of Finis on an even keel. But this would be against all precedent. The opening chapters must needs be made sufficiently stirring to catch the reluctant attention of readers. Then there must needs be occasional breaks — a sort of "to be continued"—to fire the flagging zeal of the yawning public. There must needs be some mysterious influence, known only to the narrator, but cropping out now and then, which can only be

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revealed in a retrospect. Because if the action of the drama were commonplace, and the events followed in orderly sequence, the most gigantic intellect would certainly be drowned in slumber before the story were half told.

Proceed tranquilly then, gentle reader. All these people have been presented to you in the earlier chapters; and be comforted to know that they all, excepting one or two, shall either depart this life within the limits of this Book, or pass out of this history, which is about the same thing.

CHAPTER XLI.

L'Abime Noir.

At the breakfast table at Maison Rouge assembled Mrs. Trumpley, Mrs. Grahame, and the Reverend Edward. Mr. Trumpley was in town. Of late he has been spending a night there occasionally, while his wife remained at the suburban residence. Mr. Grahame has been hinting at the necessity for his return to Blackfriars, seconded by his wife, whose health is restored in great measure; and Mrs. Trumpley foregoes the frivolities of Baden for the sake of her sister's society. This morning there are letters, sent out from town by Mr. Trumpley, and each one of the trio finds matter of absorbing interest in the correspondence.

First: Mrs. Grahame has a letter from America; four pages closely written.

"It is from Mabel, Dora," she said; "she is in Virginia. Mr. Stratton has bought a plantation there. Where is Virginia, Mr. Grahame?"

"It is somewhere in America," answered her husband. "I don't remember the exact locality. Not far from New York, I fancy. You know Sir Walter Raleigh discovered it, and named it in honor of Queen Bess. Tobacco grows there."

"She says the country is beautiful," continued Mrs. Grahame, after receiving this choice morsel of geography, history, and botany, "but rather wild."

"Of course," said Mr. Grahame; "Indians, no doubt. The Powhatans or Passawottimies, or something. I think they are half-civilised though. Still it must be uncomfortable to have such fellows about."

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"Mabel has a son, Dora. His name is De Witt. Oh, if poor Papa had only lived till this time, he would have forgotten all his anger and would have forgiven Mabel! My dear," she continued, addressing her husband, "I have never told you all about Mabel's marriage. Papa quarrelled with Uncle Clinton, who is our mother's brother, and he ceased his visits to our house. But Mabel was always his favorite, and Papa allowed her to spend the winter in New York with him, and she there met Mr. Stratton and became engaged to him. There was a great deal of angry correspondenee between Uncle Clinton and Papa on the subject, as there was really no possible objection to Mr. Stratton excepting his American birth. But Papa finally yielded, upon condition that Mr. Clinton should make some sort of settlement giving Mabel his property at his death. I don't understand all the legal points, but after Mabel was married there was a fiercer quarrel than ever, and Mr. Stratton took sides with Uncle Clinton, and poor Mabel adhered to her husband. We left Canada shortly afterwards, and Papa forbade us to mention our sister's name to him. We have had letters from her regularly since Papa's death, and we have discovered that Mr. Clinton's settlement in some way bound Papa to leave *his* property to Mabel too. That is the reason that Beechwood is in chancery."

"That could hardly be," said Mr. Grahame; "your father could not make a contract in America that would bind property afterwards bought in England."

"There is something in the title-deed to Beechwood," said Dora, "that confirms the agreement. What else does Mabel say, Daisy?"

"She says their nearest neighbor is three miles distant. Mr. Stratton is devoted to farming, and they are very happy. She fills two pages with arguments to induce me to go to America and live with her. Shall we go, Mr. Grahame?"

"Not immediately, my dear," answered her husband; "but my letter contains a very urgent invitation to Blackfriars. We must go to-morrow, I think."

"We will all go at the end of the week," said Mrs. Trumpley; "Mr. Trumpley promised me yesterday. I have not read my letter yet."

She rose from the table as she spoke, and moved over to the window-seat. Half hidden behind the curtain she broke the seal, humming the refrain of a song. Mr. Grahame and his wife remained at the table discussing the contents of their letters. They did not notice the cessation of the song; and while they were still intent upon

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their plans for the return to Blackfriars, Mrs. Trumpley read her letter. It was anonymous.

"If Mrs. Trumpley," it ran, "will take the trouble to send or go to Châlons, she will discover perhaps the secret of Mr. Trumpley's interest in that town. In La Rue Saint Jean, number four, she will find a lady living in great retirement, who receives regular remittances from Mr. Trumpley, and who claims from him the honor of bearing his name."

That was all.

Leaving Mr. Grahame and her sister, Dora went quietly out of the breakfast-room. Entering her chamber and locking the door, she took out the villainous note and read it again, pondering each word.

Châlons! They had spent a week there, just before coming to Baden. During the week her husband was absent from her an hour each day, and she remembered that he evaded her questions when she inquired with a bride's petulance where he went and whom he found in the quaint town to attract him away from her. He seemed oppressed with some care and anxiety, and put her off with the explanation that he had unpleasant business to transact which did not concern her, and which would only annoy her if she knew all its details. Somehow she had so profound a confidence in the innate nobleness of Trumpley's nature, though he was rugged and wilful, that the vague charge of villainy in the note did not impress her particularly. But she was incensed at the thought that some color was given to the insinuation by her husband's persistent refusal to tell the nature of his "unpleasant business."

What was to be done? Should she tell Daisy? Never! Should she wait Mr. Trumpley's return and lay the anonymous communication before him? Certainly. That was precisely the thing to do; and in the meantime she would resolutely banish the whole subject from her thoughts. Harold Trumpley, cold, morose, repulsive in manner and unattractive in person, was still a gentleman, incapable of deceit or falsehood.

She unlocked her jewel-case, placed the note therein, and relocking it, went down stairs and rejoined Daisy and Mr. Grahame. They were equipping themselves for a walk.

"Come, Dora," said her sister, "we are waiting for you. Here is your hat."

"Where are you going?" said Dora.

"To L'Abîme Noir. We want your guidance. Marie has told us so many tales of its horrors that we are dying of curiosity to see it."

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"You will not need a guide," said Dora. "Take the forest-road, and climb the hill on the right where the road divides."

"Oh, come with us," said Daisy; "we will not go without you. Do you suppose we would leave you alone here?"

"What has Marie told you?" said Mrs. Trumpley, as she donned hat and mantle. "I am afraid of hobgoblins."

"Not by daylight, surely," replied Mr. Grahame.

"They are not dangerous," added Daisy, gaily. "They are merely the ghosts of former residents of Maison Rouge, and of some of their victims. It is the scenery that I desire to see. Marie says it is superbly gloomy. Is the walk long?"

"Very short," answered her sister. "The chasm is only half a mile distant; but the hill is steep."

"We are good climbers," said Mrs. Grahame. "Are you ready? Come along. You may have Mr. Grahame's other arm."

On the road the thick trees shut out the sunlight, and the ascent of the rocky hill was rough and toilsome. The summit was a plateau surrounded by a border of gloomy trees, enclosing a space of two or three acres; and across this area a rift ran, opened in the rock probably by some natural convulsion in the past ages. There was no vegetable growth near the chasm, which was only a few yards wide, but of unknown depth. Mr. Grahame threw a pebble against the opposite side, and they could hear it bounding back and forth in the ragged fissure several seconds after it was lost to sight. The surface of the rock was smooth and level where they stood, and also on the opposite side of the opening, the jagged edges corresponding each with the other very accurately. There were places where a man might leap across from one side to the other, and at either end of the rift the strata seemed to run together, closing the dismal abyss and shutting it up in its unique horror. There were no signs of human habitation in sight, and all the surroundings were desolate and forbidding. The road wound round the base of the hill, and there were few that knew of the curious chasm that cared to examine its wonders. This was many years ago. No doubt the more modern votaries of science have explored its depths, accounted for its origin, and exploded the many fables that hung about it in that distant day.

"Harold brought me here," said Mrs. Trumpley, "two weeks ago. He was highly amused at my horror. He has spent many days here, he says, when he desired to get away from human society, as he was secure from interruption or intrusion. Indeed he fills his pockets with cigars and comes out here still, whenever he falls into one of his solitary moods."

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"Which is seldom," said Mr. Grahame.

"Yes. He has only been here a few times. Since the hotels have filled up he likes Baden better."

"It would not do for a pic-nic," said Mrs. Grahame; "the hill is too hard to climb."

"And there is no grass," said her husband.

"I don't think any one could be jolly here," said Mrs. Trumpley. "The clock-makers who live on the road a little beyond the hill have numberless stories of this locality. There is one they tell of a young English gentleman who lost all his fortune at the gaming-table in Baden some years ago. He was engaged to be married, and his fiancée, who was a German baroness, sat by him, betting with him, and lost largely also. They came out here the same night and threw themselves into the Black Abyss. He left a note, saying he had been betting on Rouge without success, and would try Noir. This is the latest horror."

"If they went over here," said Mr. Grahame, looking into the dark rift, "they encountered a dozen deaths before they reached the bottom. Look down, Daisy."

"Not I!" replied his wife. "Come away! Come away, Dora! What are you thinking of, standing there on the brink of destruction? Let us go back."

Dora was thinking that the Black Abyss would be the proper place in which to hide her mortification and end her dismal existence, if there should ever happen to be a truth in her history corresponding with the anonymous lie about Châlons.

CHAPTER XLII.

Dora's Journey.

The day passed without other events of importance. Dinner-time arrived; the meal was delayed a little, but Mr. Trumpley did not appear. Dora read her note again when she retired, and decided more emphatically that it was a fraud. At breakfast the next morning Captain Merton presented himself at Maison Rouge in time to partake of the morning meal. He brought a letter for Mrs. Trumpley.

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"I told Trumpley I would be postman this morning," he said, "as I was going to drive out anyhow. I was longing for some of your tea."

"Why did you not bring him with you?" asked Mrs. Grahame. "We have not seen him for two days."

"Oh, he's off; went in the early train. The letter will explain, no doubt. Ah, this tea is nectar. Mrs. Trumpley, if my ship is ordered to China I will bring you a chest of the best the Flowery Land will furnish. We English don't get the best; the Russian fellows monopolise it, they say."

While he was uttering this speech, he was furtively watching Dora reading her letter; and she, conscious of his scrutiny, preserved her composed exterior, though the color left her cheeks as she read. The note was short.

"*Dear Wife:*— I am called suddenly away to Châlons, but expect to return to-morrow. I am disappointed, as I expected to come to you this morning; but this business is urgent. The enclosed note came last night, too late to send to you. It is probably a milliner's bill, however. If so, do not distress yourself about the amount, as I was lucky last night and won enough money to redeem Halidon.

"Your affectionate husband,

"HAROLD TRUMPLEY."

Mrs. Trumpley put the "milliner's bill" in her pocket unopened. It occurred to her that Captain Merton was watching her to see what effect that might produce, and the blood came back to her pale cheeks and brow. There was a sympathising tone in his voice in the next sentence that was highly offensive.

"Mr. Trumpley should have a good excuse for leaving such society," he said; "I mean for his railway excursion. He had a good excuse for staying in Baden last night; he won about twenty thousand pounds."

"Twenty thousand pounds!" said Mr. Grahame.

"At least. I saw him exchange a lot of gold for bills on the Bank of France. He carried them off with him to Châlons. One more cup of tea, Mrs. Trumpley. He took the early train; he will be at Châlons by noon. In fact we were up all night. Lamont won a lot too."

The gallant captain rattled on in this style until breakfast was over; then the gentlemen adjourned to the smoking-room, and in

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their absence Dora examined her "milliner's bill." It was written on scented paper, and was very interesting. It was like the note of the previous day in being anonymous, but differing in that this was evidently feminine in caligraphy, if not in matter and style.

"If your husband, as he calls himself, is as suspicious as he is treacherous, you will not receive this note. He will get an invitation to Châlons to-day from Madame 'Hamet,' as *she* calls herself, and he will be apt to accept it. Madame 'Hamet' resides at Number Four Rue St. Jean. No doubt you will think Mr. Trumpley the soul of honor, and no doubt Madame 'Hamet' holds the same opinion. But nothing is easier than to confirm yourself in this well-placed confidence by going yourself to Châlons and making a friendly call upon Madame. I am obliged to send this intelligence by post under cover to Mr. Trumpley. If he should break the seal and possess himself of the contents, he will only add one more wrong to the many he has done to you; but if not, and if you receive this intact, it will be quite a providential intimation to you to look after your interests in person. The only motive the writer has is to unmask a deceiver."

Mrs. Trumpley took this entertaining note to her chamber and compared it with the former communication upon the same subject. They were not the work of the same hand; they were unlike in everything except in unmistakable hostility to Harold Trumpley. With the infallible and swift intuition of her sex, Dora divined that Captain Merton knew the character of this last missive, and probably of the first also. She would know certainly when she met him. Locking up the two notes, she returned to the ground-floor, and finding Daisy in the drawing-room, entered into vivacious conversation with her upon a dozen indifferent topics; and when Captain Merton appeared at last, his quick, eager glance at her face confirmed her in her suspicion.

And now for the motive.

Well, first of all, Captain Merton had offered his hand and heart to Dora a few months ago, and had been rejected. While pleading for a favorable response he had referred to Trumpley as a known rival, and dwelt upon his moroseness, his erratic habits, his disregard of all the conventional laws of the time; and in his anger when she coldly dismissed him (it was at Halidon, where she was visiting), he had sneeringly wished her joy in her conquest of the savage that owned the estate.

And when they met again at Baden he had impudently referred to

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his "withered hopes," and was silenced with considerable difficulty, and only by her haughty refusal to listen. There was something very disgusting in his languishing looks, and just now there was a shade of sympathy in his tones that offended her highly.

"Does Mr. Trumpley say when he will return?" he asked, taking a chair near her.

"Really, I did not notice," she replied, indifferently. "Shall I get his letter for you? I left it up-stairs," and she swept by him and left the room. This was a little too much for the gallant sailor. He sat awhile where she left him, and presently heard her voice above carolling a song. He said something to Mrs. Grahame about an "engagement with Lamont," took his hat and walked out upon the drive. As he climbed up into his trap and gathered up the reins, the chorus of her song came floating out of the window:

"Sing tira, la, la, la, la, la, la, la,
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Captain Merton gave his horse a savage cut with the whip, and vanished down the road in a cloud of dust.

Mrs. Trumpley threw herself upon the lounge, her hilarious song ending in a flood of tears.

At noon she came down, equipped for walking. She was going to Baden. Mr. Trumpley had his rooms at the Hotel d'Angleterre. She would meet him if the afternoon train brought him. Marie would walk in with her; they would return to-morrow in the pony-carriage. Mr. and Mrs. Grahame must keep house during her absence.

The train came, but no Trumpley. She dined in her room. No other train until next morning. There was one for Châlons, leaving at ten o'clock. She put on her hat, threw a thick veil over it, walked down to the station, procured her ticket, and was leaving Baden behind her before she was fully conscious of her acts or intentions. Halfway to Châlons a down train passed, and the thought that her husband was perhaps a passenger on it entered her mind; but she was confused and flighty, and the thought passed with the swift train. Perhaps some magnetic influence had suggested it, as he really was there.

At Châlons it was raining — a regular torrent. She heeded it not, but passing out into the street, accosted a woman who was gazing at the crowd of passengers.

"Number four, Rue Saint Jean," she said, putting a franc in the woman's hand.

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"Oui, Madame. Allons!" replied the other, looking at the care-worn countenance of the half-demented lady with genuine sympathy.

The rain lashed the pavements, drenching Dora in five minutes. She only knew that her temples throbbed less painfully while the storm beat upon her, and she walked on in a sort of stupor, trying to think of something to say when she reached her destination.

"Number four, Madame," said her guide, stopping at last. "Will Madame enter? Ah, the door opens."

An old sister of charity coming out, struggling with an umbrella that refused to expand. She glanced at Dora incuriously as she brushed by her. A second sister was in the passage, and being bulky, she was impassable.

"Madame Hamet?" said Dora.

"Ah, yes," said the fat sister, moving aside; "au seconde the first door."

Dora ascended the stairs, and opening the door at the landing, she entered the chamber. It was imperatively necessary to collect her thoughts now. She laid aside her dripping bonnet and shawl, and looked curiously around the room. The window-shades were down and the room darkened. A bed in the corner, and some one upon it. She approached softly. Sleeping?

A pale-faced woman with black eyebrows and black hair. Her eyes were closed; so quietly sleeping that Dora could not hear her respirations. She drew nearer, and her thoughts became gradually more coherent as she looked at the cold face of the dead woman. The rigid figure, the smooth bed-furniture, the white ribbon under the chin, the thin nostril, so waxlike and transparent. Dead!

She walked down stairs, and out of the house. No purpose now but to move on. She had left her bonnet and shawl, but knew it not. There was a cape to her dress, and she put it over her head. Somehow she found the station.

"Paris?" said a porter, as she entered.

"Yes."

"Quickly, if Madame pleases; the train departs in two minutes. The office is here. Ticket! Paris!" and looking doubtfully at Dora, added, "First class! Sixteen francs, if Madame pleases. The change. Ah, merci! This way. Madame has the carriage all to herself."

Perfectly mad now, and yet with enough method in her madness to preserve a composed exterior. She reached Paris, and getting a voiture, was driven to another station; obtained a ticket for London.

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How she passed through the various impediments in her way she never knew, but when she landed at Dover her beautiful hair was streaked with gray.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Mr. Grippe's Luck.

On the night before Dora's departure for Baden there had been some high play at the rouge-et-noir tables. The bank was out of luck. Mr. Trumpley won very largely, and Monsieur Lamont with more modest ventures also made large gains. Mr. Grippe sat by his side, noting down his winnings with affectionate earnestness. It was in the small hours when the players returned from the rooms. Mr. Trumpley exchanged his gold for large notes on the Bank of France and left for Châlons by the early train. Mr. Grippe followed Mr. Lamont to his room, and congratulated him warmly upon his success.

"I shall return to England, Mr. Lamont," he said, "in a day or two, and in the meantime we will arrange that little balance due Messrs. Browler Brothers."

"Ma foi!" answered the French banker, "it will be time enough to-morrow; at present"—and he yawned fearfully—"I am dying of fatigue."

"It will take three minutes only. See, I have made a statement of the account with interest estimated to this date. I did it while you were winning that last rouleau. Ah! Mr. Lamont, you were courageous! Here is the sum-total in francs — sixty-two thousand five hundred and two, and eight centimes."

"The devil fly away with the eight centimes!" said Mr. Lamont impatiently. "I tell you I will make no settlement to-night."

Mr. Grippe became asthmatic; he lighted a cigarette and filled the apartment with the pleasant odor of stramonium.

"Do you know, my friend," said Mr. Lamont, with a grimace, "that your 'tabac' is villainous. Poof! the apartment will cease to be habitable; one cannot sleep amid such perfumes."

"I will go as soon as you pay me," replied Grippe. "Look you, Mr. Lamont, there is no time like the present. You won nearly two hundred thousand francs to-night, and the money is in your pocket. Pay me your debt and I will leave you."

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"And if otherwise?" said Lamont, grimly.

"If I am not paid to-night I will cause you to be arrested in the morning. It pains me exceedingly, but my orders are stringent. I have delayed thus long, waiting for your luck, at your request."

Mr. Lamont counted out the money, received Mr. Grippe's acknowledgment, which he placed in his escritoire. As Grippe was retiring the Frenchman stopped him.

"It is said, Mr. Grippe," he began with charming politeness, "that the gentlemen of England are brave to a fault. It is so, is it not?"

"Cannot say, I'm sure," answered Grippe.

"Because," continued Mr. Lamont, "Mr. Grippe has displayed remarkable courage in this affair. Now I should be charmed to exchange pistol-shots with him as soon as daylight appears. I have a pair of excellent pistols in this case, and Mr. Grippe will have time to arrange for the remittance of his sixty-two thousand five hundred and two francs and eight centimes, in case of accident."

"You mean a duel?" said Grippe, aghast.

"Precisely. We will go to L'Abîme Noir at the dawn. I can find a couple of gallant gentlemen to accompany us. Or if Mr. Grippe would prefer the small-sword, the true weapon of gentlemen, I have those also."

Mr. Grippe lighted another cigarette. His breath came in spasms, and he was evidently on the verge of suffocation. So was Mr. Lamont, who threw open a window and leaned out gasping.

"You perceive how ill I am, Mr. Lamont," said Mr. Grippe between the paroxysms; "these attacks usually last two days. Will you have the kindness to postpone the affair until I — say until next week?"

"Without doubt, Mr. Grippe," answered the other.

"And I will retire, with your permission."

"Certainly, Mr. Grippe. Good repose."

Mr. Grippe gained his chamber, and locking himself in, he pushed the bedstead up against the door. Then he packed his portmanteau, and stretching himself upon the bed without undressing, slept the sleep of the just. He depended upon the asthma to wake him at six o'clock, which was train-time, but when he opened his eyes the sunlight illuminated his apartment. It was eight o'clock; no more trains until night.

He took a light breakfast in his room. Mr. Lamont sent a polite message inquiring as to his health. Many thanks — very ill.

At noon he saw the Frenchman handing a lady into a cabriolette,

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and getting in beside her, drove off. Mr. Grippe felt better, and ventured down stairs. He strolled into the playing-room, deserted at that hour. There had been some rouge-et-noir playing, and the croupier was at the table.

"Will Monsieur play?" he said, as Grippe approached.

"Ne comprenny par," answered Mr. Grippe.

"Ah!" said the croupier in English, "Monsieur does not speak French. Fortunately, I know a little English. Monsieur has not tried his luck — will he win a few Napoleons?"

A sudden desire to double the amount he had received from Mr. Lamont took possession of the young banker. Two thousand pounds! he could do everything with two thousand pounds. He laid five Napoleons on the table. There was a slight shuffling of the cards, and five more were placed beside them.

"Monsieur has won."

He won again and again; it was the easiest business in the world. He had forty Napoleons at his side, a glittering little pile. Why not finish it expeditiously? He took out a note for five hundred francs and placed it upon the red, with the forty Napoleons.

"Noir!"

"Indeed! Well, try the other color with a thousand."

"Rouge!"

He counted out ten thousand francs, registering a vow that he would quit when he won that, and would come to the accursed table no more.

"Noir!"

And so the game progressed. When he won, he had a few hundred francs at stake; when he lost, he had a few thousands. When he left the table at four o'clock the eight centimes was about all that remained of Mr. Lamont's payment.

Going back to his room, he set himself with dogged determination to a review of the situation. He had lost over two thousand pounds of the bank's money. He had as much as that at his credit on the books at home, so the firm would lose nothing; but he knew he was ruined hopelessly. He had not lost money only, but when he met Browler senior and told him of that three hours' work, he knew that he would be partner no longer, and he would have to begin life afresh, with no capital and with a stained name.

He got writing materials and began a letter to Browler Brothers, recounting the collection of the desperate debt and the loss of the money in a moment of insanity, under sudden temptation. It did not

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occur to him that he could make up a probable story of robbery or loss by some accident. Anthony Grippe robbed? Pooh!

He was a slow writer, and was still laboring on his confession when he heard the scream of the railway-engine. He looked at his watch. To his amazement he found it was ten o'clock. That was the train he intended to take. No matter.

In case "anything happened" there were some little matters he would like to arrange. There would be a few hundred pounds over when he paid the bank the lost money; so he wrote a sort of last will and testament, which he enclosed in the letter to Browler Brothers. When he sealed his confession, addressed it, stamped it, he laid it on his table. The work was done, and it was three A. M. He thought he would take a walk.

Out in the air he felt revived. He had eaten nothing since breakfast; he would go into the play-room and get a glass of wine. Champagne was flowing there like water. A biscuit and a glass — and another. Then he heard an altercation in an ante-room, and recognised Mr. Lamont's voice. A little scuffle and a blow distinctly heard. Mr. Grippe did not like fighting, so he slipped out again.

Down the street and away from the glare of the lights: presently on the unpaved road and under the starlight. A lovely night for a quiet walk. The letter was written; also the last will and testament; he would take a good long walk.

Not many houses on this road. Half-a-mile from the hotel they ceased altogether. Positive country. How still and placid the stars look! so cold and indifferent, blinking in the heavens like ten thousand eyes. The odor of the trees is pleasant. This is a wild sort of country to be within gun-shot of Baden. Regular forest now, the road overshadowed by trees. Here is a hill and a path climbing it, deflecting from the road. Where does the path lead? Let us see.

Up and up. He sat down on a rock and rested. No asthma; perhaps champagne was a remedy. He had left some poetry in his private drawer in Gloucester: what ever possessed him to write it? If he had only burnt that nonsense before he left home he would be entirely happy.

Up again. And here is the top of the hill, and the stars again, as he emerges from the shadow of the trees. An open plateau with trees all around. What is this? Oh yes! he remembers. Lamont had told him of it: L'Abîme Noir.

And now the crisis had come; for down that black abyss he was going. He chuckled as he recalled the little subterfuges he had been

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repeating as he walked, all to himself; for when he concluded that last will and testament, his purpose to find the Black Abyss and sound its depths was as clearly defined as possible.

The stars were obtrusive in their attentions; really, it would have been less unpleasant to have had pitch darkness. Then he might have fallen into the rift by accident. He looked over the edge and saw that the cleft sloped away from the perpendicular. The stars would be balked in five seconds after he took the leap.

Oh what a sorry termination of a history! Anthony Grippe, who had never known the force of a temptation to go astray in any of the paths that usually tempt young men. Drinking, gambling — why, he had no more stomach for such things than he had for murder.

Murder! When Mr. Lamont invited him to a little mutual murder he had some ado to refrain from laughter. To aim a pistol at another man and pull the trigger! Why, he would hardly do it to save his own life. But falling over that brink would be called self-murder.

Nobody would know it, however; and once done —

And then all those common doctrines relating to a future state came trooping into his mind. He caught himself twice repeating the Nicene Creed, every word of which seemed invested with new and startling emphasis.

"I believe in the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting."

He walked restlessly to and fro, debating a hundred questions in his mind. How would it do to go directly to Gloucester and tell the story to Mr. Browler senior; then to take what remained of his life's earnings and emigrate? Australia or America — he might begin afresh.

But it was so flagrant a breach of trust, to gamble away that money. He could never face Browler. Better face the dread realities at the bottom of the chasm. He knelt down on the rock and covered his face with his hands to shut out the starlight. There was also a faint streak in the eastern sky. When he looked up again a man stood before him.

"Grippe!"

He staggered to his feet and would have passed him, but he caught his arm and held him with a grasp of iron.

"What are you doing, madman? Another step, and you would be in the abyss."

"I know. Let me go, Mr. Trumpley. I am ruined. I have gambled in that infernal den and lost my partners' money."

"Pooh! don't be an ass. Money! How much have you lost?"

"Twenty-five hundred pounds."

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"Bah! I've been looking for you. I went into your chamber and waited for you an hour; and not finding you I left written instructions for you in my portmanteau in your room. Here is the key. There are twenty-five thousand pounds in the portmanteau, which I desire you to invest. Your commission is ten per centum; take it out and repay your losses. Yonder comes the daylight — away with you! I shall have company here in a few minutes; go down the hill on the other side. You will reach Baden in time for the first train. Give me your hand, man. Good-bye! Don't go into the play-room; that is the true Abîme Noir."

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Encounter.

Harold Trumpley had arrived at the Hotel d'Angleterre while Mr. Grippe was writing his last will and testament. He found his wife's maid Marie, who told him an incoherent story of Mrs. Trumpley's arrival and departure. The girl only knew that she had left in the train for Châlons; she had gone down to the station, having been dismissed for the night, to bid adieu to a sister going to Paris, and saw Madame enter the same train. Monsieur le Capitaine was at Maison Rouge in the morning, and would perhaps know.

Mr. Trumpley went to the play-room. After some search he found Captain Merton and M. Lamont in an ante-room. They had some broiled bones and champagne.

"Hillo, Trumpley!" said the Captain, hilariously. "Welcome! We will have in another bottle."

"Not for me," answered Mr. Trumpley; "I came to ask you if you know of my wife's departure for Châlons."

"Châlons!" said the sailor, with drunken gravity. "Well, well! Belay that and start afresh. So she went to Châlons! You see, Lamont, our friend here has a female acquaintance in Châlons — ha, ha! — a certain Madame Hamet. He slips away yesterday to visit her, and some kind friend informs Madame Trumpley, and she naturally gives chase."

"Who was the kind friend?" said Trumpley.

"How the devil should I know?" answered Merton, rudely.

"The kind friend lied. If you meet him, tell him from me that he is a liar and sneak."

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"Belay again," said Merton. "You must take that back, Trumpley; the friend is a lady. She wrote a confidential note—"

"Yes; I found it. Also the other, not written by a lady, but by a cowardly thief who dared not sign his name. It is one lie in both notes."

"Do you know who wrote them?" said Merton, slightly sobered.

"I think I do," answered Trumpley, with stern emphasis.

"Then here is the answer!" said Merton, seizing his glass and dashing the wine in the scowling face of the other. In a moment he was caught by the throat, lifted from his chair, and after a shake that nearly dislocated his joints, was thrown in a heap on the floor. Lamont caught his arm as he rose.

"When will you answer this?" said Merton, gasping.

"When you will," replied Trumpley, coldly. "You had better get sober first. Lamont, take the brute out and pump on him. If he wants me—"

"Here and now!" said Merton, stamping violently.

"Pooh! The servants would have the house about our ears in two minutes. I shall be at L'Abîme Noir at daybreak. Lamont, have you pistols?"

"Truly, a superb pair. Helas! can we not reconcile this little difference? No? Impossible? Eh bien! The sword is so much more quiet; I have also a pair of faultless blades. What say you, Merton?"

"Mr. Trumpley has the selection. I know very little about the sword," said Captain Merton, sullenly.

"And I less," replied Trumpley. "Bring the pistols, Lamont. I will find a friend to accompany me. *Au revoir!*"

Three hours to spare. Mr. Trumpley filled several pages of letter paper, writing rapidly and without hesitation. When the task was completed, he sealed the packet and addressed it to Mr. Anthony Grippe. He took a large package of bank-notes from his breast, enclosed them in a separate envelope, and addressed it to the same person. Taking these in his hand, he passed through the corridor to Mr. Grippe's room, knocked, and receiving no answer, opened the door and entered. There was a light on the table, a portmanteau and a letter addressed to the bank at Gloucester. Mr. Grippe was not visible. Trumpley returned to his own apartment, and placing his packages in a small portmanteau, with his watch and seals, Dora's jewel-case, which he found in a drawer of the cabinet, and from which he took the two anonymous notes, he locked the portmanteau and

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took it to Grippe's chamber, leaving it upon the table beside the other. He then put out Mr. Grippe's light and closed his door. One hour gone. A servant passed as he regained his own room, and Mr. Trumpley stopped him at the door.

"If I should not be here at seven o'clock, send Mrs. Trumpley's maid to Maison Rouge at that hour in the carriage. I will leave a note on the cabinet. Will you remember?"

"Without doubt, Monsieur."

Trumpley put some silver in his ready hand and dismissed him, and then wrote his final note:—

"*Dear Sister Daisy*:—Dora has gone to Châlons, and will probably be back to-morrow. I enclose two notes which I found here. They are lies; one written by Merton, the other by Miss Radcliffe. The former is a born liar; the latter has no cause for her malignant enmity except that I declined to make her mistress of Halidon. It pains me to write this of a woman, but it is true. I have a presentiment of impending calamity, and it has oppressed me for two days. A few hours hence it will be dispelled or confirmed. I go from this place to L'Abîme Noir. If I return, you will not receive this note. My executor will have full particulars of the Châlons business. Farewell.

"HAROLD TRUMPLEY."

It was after five o'clock when Mr. Trumpley climbed the hill of L'Abîme Noir, and a few minutes after Mr. Grippe disappeared below the crest of the hill on one side M. Lamont and Captain Merton appeared upon the other. The Captain was dressed in black, his coat buttoned up to the throat. M. Lamont had a pistol-case under his arm. They bowed ceremoniously to Trumpley, who quietly waited their approach.

"Monsieur Lamont," he said, "I regret that I have not been able to find a second. Will you do me the favor to arrange the preliminaries of this encounter?"

"Ma foi!" said the Frenchman, "this is terribly irregular, Monsieur. Suppose anything serious should occur to both of you gentlemen? I should be compromised. Permit me to return to Baden, and I will find an acquaintance who will kindly act for you."

"Very well, Monsieur," answered Trumpley. "Entrust your pistols to me during your absence; Captain Merton will wait with me."

"Lamont," said Merton, hoarsely, "don't be a fool! Load the weapons and place us."

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"Eh bien! What is to be done? Do you not see—"

"Listen," said Trumpley; "I will show you the way from all difficulty. Load *one* pistol. Go down yonder out of sight and make the preparations. If Captain Merton does not object, he shall have the choice when you return."

"There is no surgeon—"

"No need of a surgeon; only one of us will be damaged, and he will be beyond surgical skill. It is not necessary that both should die."

"This is not a duel," said the Frenchman; "it is a murder."

"Pish!" answered Trumpley; "it is the only sensible method of settlement. I fought one duel with pistols, and I then swore that I would never fight another except in this manner. The earth is not large enough to hold me and Captain Merton both on its surface. Unless he objects to my proposal, five minutes will suffice to show which of us shall remain."

"Let it be so, Lamont," said Merton. "It is not usual, but if Mr. Trumpley had a friend here acting under his instructions, you would be compelled to acquiesce; the choice is with him."

M. Lamont bowed gravely and retired below the brow of the hill. The two enemies stood a little apart, silent and calm. The little streak of light in the eastern horizon had widened, and the fleecy clouds that hung over the pathway of the coming sun were flecked with orange-spots. The gloom of the dismal plateau was deepened as the light increased, and the ray that shot from the edge of the bright disk fell upon the pallid faces of the two men, and lent to them a ghastly expression that was hideous.

M. Lamont reappeared. He placed the case on the rock between them and raised the lid. The two pistols were side by side.

"I will now retire," said he, "to the shadow of the trees. When I reach them, I will turn and drop my handkerchief. You will have had time to select the weapons and cock them. When I regain my handkerchief, one of you will be dead."

And just as the sun wheeled above the horizon, flooding the earth with light, there was a sharp report on the verge of L'Abîme Noir, and Harold Trumpley leaped from the ground and fell dead, shot through the heart.

The Frenchman knelt down and turned the body over.

"This is a bad affair, Captain Merton," he said, sternly. "You English do not fight like human beings. We have no witness to prove the fairness of this encounter. I am ashamed of my part in it."

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"Is he dead?" said Merton.

Lamont took up the hand of the dead man and withdrew the pistol from his relaxing grasp.

"Your bullet has gone through him — dead as Henri Quatre."

"What need of witnesses?" said Merton, brutally. "Let us throw him into the cleft."

"*Fi donc!*" replied Lamont. "Come away! Leave him where he lies. You and I will cross the frontier and let some one else tell the story. I am dumb on the subject henceforth. *Allons!*"

And when the banker was seated in his office in Marseilles, and the white wings of Captain Merton's ship were bearing him towards Malta, all Baden was ringing with the story of the English gentleman who had wandered away to the dismal hill, after winning fabulous sums from the bank, to be waylaid, robbed and murdered by some of the brigands who always flocked to the watering-place in the season. The body was carried to England to be laid in his ancestral tomb. Mr. and Mrs. Grahame followed shortly after, their departure being delayed by the lady's serious illness, caused by the terrible shock. New arrivals at the Hotel d'Angleterre filled up the vacated rooms, and bringing new gossip with them from the busy world without, they speedily chased away the memory of Harold Trumpley and his party. Miss Radcliffe went to Geneva, thence to Italy, and when the winter came on she was at Naples, happening by a fortunate chance to find Captain Merton's ship there. Maison Rouge was once more turned over to the owls and bats. Mr. Grahame went to Châlons the day after the duel, and brought back to his distracted wife no tidings of Dora; and it was not until they were safe in the Blackfriars parsonage, and her health partially restored, that he told her the sequel of the Châlons story.

There had been a fire, sweeping away a dozen houses, and among them Number Four, Rue Saint Jean. A Sister of Charity, Sister Clementine, had been acquainted with the locality, and told of an English lady who had entered this house an hour before the fire. She had met her in the passage, seeking Madame Hamet, who had died two days before; but no one had seen this lady come out, and among the few articles saved from the flames were a bonnet and shawl, charred and ruined, but not beyond identification. And these relics Mr. Grahame took away with him, assured that the hapless owner of them had passed through the dark portals at the same hour that her husband met his death at L'Abîme Noir.

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CHAPTER XLV.

The Will.

In the name of God, amen. I, Harold Trumpley, of Halidon, Gloucester, gentleman, being in sound mind, albeit in sore distress, do make this my only will and testament.

I give and bequeath to my dear wife, Dora Lennox Trumpley, all the property of which I die possessed, and that may be devised by will, subject to the conditions that follow:

Whereas my death, if it should occur to-day, will have been caused by certain events in my past history, it is needful that I relate those events herein, in order that my executor shall appreciate the nature of the obligations resting upon him as my representative.

Eight months ago I left Halidon greatly perplexed, owing to the condition of my estate, which had just been unfolded to me by my legal adviser, and also in doubt as to the success of long-cherished purposes and desires. I went to Paris, and finding acquaintances there, engaged in play night after night at the Strangers' Club. I played ecarté with some success, winning every night for a week. Among other losers was a Monsieur Hamet, who rose from the table one night saying that such continued success could not be accounted for, except upon the supposition that I knew the cards by their backs. I had won a few thousand francs from this gentleman. I demanded the instant retraction of this injurious and false charge, and as he persisted I invited him to the Bois du Boulogne. We met the next morning and fought with pistols, and it was my dire misfortune to kill him at the first fire. My second hurried me away to Châlons, where I remained until the danger of arrest was over. While there, I learned that the widow of this gentleman lived there with an infant daughter. They were in poor circumstances; he was a writer engaged upon one of the daily papers in Paris, and the family revenues ended with his life.

I had rooms in Châlons, at No. 4 Rue St. Jean, and Madame Hamet took the second floor of the same house. I frequently met the child in the passages, was attracted by her prattle, and was led by her to her mother's apartments, where I discovered her relationship to the man I had slain. It was clear that the support of this helpless family devolved upon me, and during the past eight months I have supplied their wants out of my scanty revenues. Two days ago I was sud-

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denly summoned to Châlons by the announcement of Madame Hamet's approaching death. I arrived one hour before she died, and she confided the little Heloïse to my care with her latest breath.

I took the child away from the death-chamber, and gave her in charge of Madame Villaire, at the convent of Saint Jacques (where she is known as Sister Clementine). I paid her the needful expenses of the child's maintenance and education for five years. I made this large payment because I was oppressed with a presentiment of approaching death, which still clings to me.

I spoke of scanty revenues. Since my marriage I have heard from my solicitor, who assured me that my estate would bear no more encumbrance, and that he could furnish me with no more money. The last mortgage was created on the eve of my marriage, yielding me only two thousand pounds, all of which was expended except a hundred, with which I entered the play-room at Baden on Monday night last. I played wildly and recklessly, and won twenty-six thousand pounds. Out of this money I have paid my local bills at Baden and the expenses referred to at Châlons, and the remainder, twenty-five thousand pounds in notes on the Bank of England and the Bank of France, I herewith place in the hands of my executor.

The charges I put upon him relate first to the infant Heloïse. I desire that he shall go to Châlons immediately, see the child, confer with Madame Villaire, and make such arrangements as seem best to him for the future. While he lives, and while Heloïse lives, I charge him to be a father to her, as I would have been, and to see that she is reared a gentlewoman ; and if she should marry at proper age, to see that she is portioned as becomes a daughter of my house. My wife will approve of this arrangement, and will approve of my purpose to leave the twenty-five thousand pounds in the hands of my executor — *her* property, but subject to this charge.

The second charge relates to Halidon. After my death the mortgages will be foreclosed and the property will be sold. I desire my executor to purchase this estate, in the name of Dora Lennox Trumpley, should she be alive at the date of such sale ; and if not, to purchase it in his own name, holding it in trust for final disposal as follows :

Failing my wife, whose death alone can divert the inheritance from her, my sister, Edith Trumpley, is the natural inheritor of Halidon, and of all my estate. She has an annuity of five hundred pounds, under my father's will, the principal of which reverts to Halidon and its owner at her death. This will, made by our father, Oswald

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Trumpley, is peculiar. Proud of his pure Saxon blood, he expressly provides that Halidon shall not pass to a female of the race, but may pass to her son, "if his father is of pure Saxon strain," and if this son take the name of Trumpley at his majority. In the absence of formal entail, my solicitor informs me, this provision could not be sustained; but the desire of my father, thus clearly expressed, has with me all the force of a legal enactment. I therefore cannot bequeath Halidon to Edith, directly; but it is my will and desire that my executor shall hold this estate until the son of my sister shall attain his majority, being the son of a Saxon gentleman, and shall assume the name of his maternal grandfather, Oswald Trumpley, when my executor will place him in possession of my estate and its accretions.

These general directions also apply to the furniture at present in the house, and to all such movable property, such as carriages and the like, as may now pertain to the establishment. I desire and will that the general arrangement of the house and grounds shall not be changed, in so far as change may be avoided; that the deer in the park shall be cared for, and the adornment of the grounds which I have begun shall be continued and completed.

The record of my marriage will be found at the British Legation in Paris. I met my wife there unexpectedly, less than three months ago, and we came to Baden, after spending a week at Châlons. I have not communicated with any one in England, excepting my solicitor, and to him I said nothing of my marriage, as our correspondence related only to pecuniary arrangements.

I prefer that all the visible property standing in my name shall be sold under the various liens upon it, because I cannot enumerate my debts, and the law will thus liquidate all that are just. The money entrusted to my executor is intended to begin afresh the formation of an estate, to be inherited, first, by my wife, and second, by the son of my sister, without any possible claims to be contested.

But it is also necessary to provide for the failure of this second intention. Should there be no male heir born to Edith Trumpley, or should such an heir be born not of Saxon paternity, then my executor is hereby invested with all the rights herein conveyed, with no conditions or limitations excepting those relating to Heloïse.

And I name and appoint Mr. Anthony Grippe, banker, of Gloucester, England, at present in Baden, my sole executor; and I do cheerfully place all these trusts in his hands, relying confidently upon his known integrity; and I hereby give and bequeath to him ten per

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centum of the moneys conveyed as his commission for the faithful appropriation of the residue. And I will and devise that so much of those moneys as may remain in his hands after the purchase of Halidon shall be employed by him in his business, and such a proportion of the gains upon it as he shall decide to be just shall be added to the total transferred by him to the first and second inheritors hereinbefore described. If my wife shall survive me, and obtain possession of Halidon, as provided in this testament, then I desire my executor to furnish her with her just proportion of such interest or profits until the maturity and marriage of Heloïse, as provided herein; and after this event, I will and desire that she, Dora Lennox Trumpley, shall assume the absolute custody and control of all my estate.

The presentiment of evil under which I write this will and testament is not new to me, and hitherto some calamity has always followed these premonitions. This time the feeling is peculiarly portentous, and I feel a similar apprehension of impending evil threatening my wife. In so far as I am able, I earnestly pray that evil may be averted from her; yet I make these additional provisions lest the presentiment should prove truer than my petitions.

Done at Baden-Baden this twenty-ninth day of August, in the year 1845. Witness my hand and seal.

HAROLD TRUMPLEY of Halidon.

Witnesses: JULES PREESET, Commissionaire.
ADOLPHE DUMAS.

Mr. Grippe read this document in the gray morning-light while the train from Baden was receding from that town at the rate of forty miles an hour, and before the first stopping-place was reached he had made some changes in his luggage.

The package of bank-notes he placed in the leg of his boot, the will in a pocket on the inside of his waistcoat, the watch and seals in the other boot-leg, carefully wrapped in various papers; and he dropped Mr. Trumpley's portmanteau, now emptied, out the car-window when the train was crossing a stream. It was bound with heavy brass hoops, and he saw it turn over once and then disappear under the rushing waters. His carriage contained no other passengers, perhaps because he had indulged in a cigarette or two while waiting at the station, and the pleasant odor of stramonium did not attract the three or four voyagers who thrust their noses in at the door.

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Arrived at Châlons, he promptly sought and found Sister Clementine, who fortunately understood English. He saw the child, bright and happy, totally unconscious of her bereavement; and leaving his address with Madame Villaire, who seemed to be an authority at the convent, he arranged for monthly reports to be sent him at Gloucester, and formally assumed the charge of Heloïse and the direction of her future. The name of the banker impressed the ex-court lady, whose husband had signed himself "De la Villaire"—much more profoundly than that of Trumpley de Halidon. Such is life.

When all was done, he had time to catch the Paris train. Here he remained until the succeeding day, sleeping in his boots. On the following morning he deposited his money with Messrs. Delisle Frêres, thereby reducing the apparent development of his calves materially. Twenty-five hundred pounds were placed to the credit of Browler Brothers, and twenty-two thousand five hundred to the credit of Anthony Grippe.

On the third day he was in Gloucester. Mr. Browler senior met him at the station; he had a paper containing a tragic story. Mr. Harold Trumpley had been murdered near Baden, and his wife, ministering to a sick woman at Châlons, had fallen asleep after a tiresome journey, and perished in the flames of a conflagration that had swept away half a street. Mr. Grippe could answer no questions, as he was momently strangling under an aggravated attack of asthma, which kept him abed nine days, at the end of which period people forgot he had been to Baden.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Exit Dora.

Instead of getting out at the proper station, Dora left the railway-carriage at Cannon Street. It was early twilight, and the city streets were thronged. She was jostled by the hurrying crowds, and after passing St. Paul's churchyard, she turned down a quiet street and paused irresolute at a door-step. While she stood, the door opened and a woman came out.

"Lodgins, mum?" she said, looking curiously at the worn face. "Lodgins? First floor back wacant—ten shillin' a week. Will you look at the rooms?"

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"Yes," replied Dora, promptly. "Can you get me some tea and a chop?"

"Surely; walk in, mum. 'Ere's the rooms. Commodious. You can see the river from the winder over this. Tea and a chop? Four-and-six, mum. Ah, furrin gold! Take off yer cloak, mum. Oh, only a cape. Will you wait, mum, for the tea? I'll be back in a jiffy."

"And bring a doctor," said Dora as the woman was leaving; "something ails my head."

"All right, mum. There's a doctor at the corner; I'll 'ave him in a jiffy."

While she was gone Dora undressed rapidly. As she took off her stays, she noticed a little rent exposing the whalebone, and with a cunning smile on her face she thrust two or three Napoleons into the opening, leaving eight or nine in her purse. When the landlady returned, followed by a bald old gentleman with green goggles over his eyes, Dora was abed.

"What is your name?" said she.

"Mrs. 'Arris, mum."

"Well, Mrs. Harris, here is my purse; please take care of it for me. Doctor — are you the doctor?"

"Yes. Let me have your hand. So. You are fatigued. Where do you suffer?"

"My head. Can you give me something to make me sleep? I have not slept for three days. Ah me! shall I ever sleep again?"

"I shall give you a draught; Mrs. Harris will get it," answered the doctor. "Keep quiet as you can. We will be better to-morrow perhaps."

Mrs. Harris brought the draught and a cup of tea in due time; also a chop done to a turn.

"'Changed your furrin gold, mum," she began; "sixteen shillin's. One week's rent, ten; tea and chop, four-and-six; bread and butter, sixpence. I 'ave the hodd shillin' in your purse, mum. Try to swaller a bite, mum. You'll pay the doctor for the draught. Take it now, mum? The 'andle is off the cup; but you won't mind that. Can't eat your chop? Well, drink the tea, poor dear! Which you 'avent told me your name, mum, if any one should call."

"Madame Hamet, Numero Quatre, Rue Saint Jean," said Dora, rousing herself with difficulty.

"Can't remember all that," muttered the landlady. "Will you 'ave anything more, mum?"

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"No. Run out please, and take away the light."

Mrs. Harris retired to the kitchen, taking the untasted supper with her. While she munched the chop, she counted Dora's money and soliloquised.

"Nine furrin pieces and a shillin'," she said. "The doctor will 'ave to be paid; I'll lay aside a couple for him. That leaves seven. She talks purty fair Hinglish. I must git a girl to wait on her, of course. That's another. And I'm worrited so with her furrin ways and her sickness that I'll 'ave a spell myself. That's two more. Four furrin pieces won't go a great way if she is sick long. Must ask the doctor."

During the next four days and nights Dora struggled with death and the doctor. She had left Baden in vigorous health, and this fact saved her life. On the fifth morning Mrs. Harris found her propped up with the pillows, pale and languid, but evidently in her right mind. She had repeated the same sentence a hundred times in the four days, and nothing else: "Madame Hamet, Numero Quatre, Rue Saint Jean."

The doctor was with the landlady. Mrs. Trumpley was looking wistfully at the long tangled tresses of white hair that hung upon her neck and shoulders.

"It has turned white since I have been ill," she said. "How long have I been here?"

"Five days, Madam," answered the doctor. "We are better to-day; the crisis was last night, Madam Hamet."

Dora looked at him steadily without replying.

"We need nourishment above everything. Can you take some gruel?"

"Yes."

"And some beef-tea?"

"Yes."

"And some port-wine? Mrs. Harris, *I'll* send the wine. Open the shutter, please. Ah, the light hurts your eyes."

"Yes. Can you get me glasses like yours?"

"The very thing. Mrs. Harris, send to the surgery in half-an-hour. I will leave the wine and the glasses—"

"And your bill, Doctor," said the patient. "Mrs. Harris, you have my purse."

"Yes, mum," replied the landlady, rather appalled by the sudden restoration of reason, and rather subdued by the quiet authority in Dora's manner. "'Ere it is, mum. I've 'ad to spend some—"

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"No doubt, Mrs. Harris. Thank you. We will settle to-morrow. I feel almost able to go out. May I venture, Doctor?"

"Well, not to-day, Madam," replied the doctor; "we are not so strong as we think. When we can take — hum — say a beef-steak with relish — say to-morrow. We have had a severe attack; nothing but a strong constitution and the most watchful attendance and most prompt treatment of symptoms could have brought us through. Allow me," and he felt her pulse. "Ninety-one; a little febrile still, but the crisis is past. I think we can rely upon the *vis medicatrix* now. And the wine —"

"Will not beer do as well, Doctor? I do not like wine."

"Ah, well, perhaps," answered the doctor, relinquishing two shillings profit with a struggle; "if we think beer agrees with us better. Bass, Mrs. Harris."

In the evening Dora was up and dressed. Mrs. Harris had brought her a paper, and it contained the frightful story that Mr. Grippe had heard on his return to Gloucester, with some additions. Mr. Harold Trumpley of Halidon, Gloucester, had been waylaid and murdered near Baden, and his body had been brought across Channel and interred with the bones of his ancestors at Merton. His wife had died at Châlons, and her body had been consumed in the great fire described in a previous paper. Dora read this account twenty times, as if trying to fix the tragic events in her memory. There was a dull sensation in her mind less agonising than would have been possible had she not been more or less demented. The journey from Baden to London was like a troubled dream, in the midst of which the episode at Châlons, with the dead woman on the bed, the incessant sweep of the rain, and the forlorn horror of her own condition, betrayed and cast out, were the salient points. She dimly remembered her arrival at her lodgings, and the secretion of the few coins in her stays. The death of her husband seemed the natural accompaniment of the story, and the sense of bereavement was less acute than the sense of unspeakable injury and wrong done to her. The memory of her sister was apparently effaced entirely, and there gradually grew upon her a positive doubt of her own identity. She crept into bed at last without undressing, and once in the night she arose, and with her white hair streaming around her she paced the narrow chamber, somnambulic. Crazed, positively; yet retaining such semblance of reason that no one ignorant of her previous history would have suspected the aberration.

She was up early the next day. Mrs. Harris brought her a beef-

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steak and beer; her bodily health came back rapidly, and her appetite was ravenous. After breakfast she sat an hour or two poring over the paper again. She read and re-read the dismal paragraph, and finally tore off that side of the sheet and put it in her pocket. As she was folding the fragment, a word on the opposite side caught her eye. It was an advertisement:

"Wanted: A housekeeper, to take charge of Beechwood, near Gloucester, at present unoccupied. Apply, with references, to Mr. Codicil, Number Six, Old Court, City, at ten o'clock A. M."

When she had read this two or three times, laboring to fix the locality of "Old Court" in her mind, she suddenly started up and went into the street. At the door she met Mrs. Harris.

"Lawks!" said that lady; "you come on me like a ghost! Are you going out? You 'ave no bonnet."

"Lend me yours," replied Dora, promptly.

"'Taint fit for the likes o' you," said the landlady, taking it off, however. Dora tied it on her head, and going to the corner, which was a cab-stand, entered one of the vehicles. The driver touched his hat as he closed the door.

"Number six, Old Court."

She paid the fare when the cabman let her out, and walked up the stone steps, glancing at the signs on the doors in the hall. A boy came out of one of the offices, and stared at her curiously.

"Where is Mr. Codicil's?" she asked.

"In 'ere, mum," answered the boy; "walk in, mum. He will be 'ere every minnit now. Take a seat, mum."

Left to herself, she began to arrange her thoughts. What should she say to Mr. Codicil? She took out the bit of paper and read the advertisement again. References!

And then by that mysterious faculty or instinct, or what you may please to call it, by which insane persons reach swift decisions, she emerged from the difficulty on the instant. She had noticed a stationer's shop adjoining Number six, and she quietly walked out of the office, down the steps and into the shop.

"A sheet of note-paper, please," she said to the shopman; "a pen and ink and envelope," and she laid a sixpence on the counter.

And when Mr. Codicil arrived, half-an-hour later, he found an old woman with green spectacles and a poke-bonnet waiting patiently in his office. She seemed to be deaf, but put a note in his hand, which he opened and read as follows:

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"BEECHWOOD, *October 1st*, 1844.

"The bearer, Mrs. Hamet, is well known to me, and I confidently recommend her to any one needing a housekeeper, as eminently trustworthy and capable. DORA LENNOX."

Mrs. Harris never saw the old poke-bonnet, and never received the pay for it directly; and though she referred to the loss of it so long as she remained above-ground as a heinous robbery, she probably had secured its value in her previous provisions against contingencies while she had custody of Dora's purse.

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Book V.

SOME ODD TRICKS.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Another.

The Third Book in this history closed with the account of an interview between Mr. Wailes and Mr. Radcliffe Merton which was the reverse of friendly. There had been a growing coolness between these old friends, and their later intercourse had been marked by sundry cross-purposes, and the creation of sundry suspicions on either side. First of all, each had detected the other's admiration of Mabel; and the knowledge that each possessed of Mr. Clinton's rapid progress in that lady's favor did not modify their private antagonism. It was one of those cases in which a junction of forces against a common enemy was not to be thought of. The young men had discovered that they were predestined rivals at the Halidon dinner-table, only by intercepting glances, bold on one side and shy on the other. Next came the revelation to Trumpley that Mr. Merton was on good terms with Blauvelt, and Merton's discovery that Trump was silent and suspicious. Therefore, when Radcliffe failed in his financial scheme, the smouldering fires burst out, and a first-class quarrel ensued. It is very probable if Mabel had remained at Blackfriars, their old friendship would not have terminated so rudely. Radcliffe had learned to endure what he called Trump's "milk-soppishness," after many trials of his patience when Wailes steadfastly refused to join in his questionable adventures; and Wailes had learned to wink at Rad's numerous aberrations, under the delusion that he would be wiser when he grew older. But now the breach was positive and past

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the possibility of healing; their old relations could never be restored. A pair of gentle eyes had enlightened them both together.

Mr. Grippe came into Trumpley's office at three o'clock, with his hat on.

"Letters all gone?" he said.

"Yes, sir," answered Trump.

"Are you going to move to-morrow?"

"No, sir; this evening."

"Humph! you are prompt. Come on; I have to send the carriage to Merton this afternoon, and I will send you in it. Give me your arm, please; you can set me down at Halidon."

When Mr. Grippe got out, and the lodge-gates were out of sight, Wailes arranged in his mind the proceedings that would be necessary. To get out of Rose Cottage was the first thing, and to get out all the Wailes property was the next. The furniture belonged to the house. They had taken all their belongings in trunks a year or two ago when they arrived from the Continent. He would stop at Rose Cottage long enough to tell his mother of Rad's rudeness, and then go on to Merton and hire a van. They would go directly to Gloucester to the Royal Hotel, and find a permanent home to-morrow.

Arrived at the stile, James opened the carriage-door, and as Trump descended, that grave footman handed him a letter.

"For Missus Wailes, sir," said James. "I'm to wait for a hanswer."

"Are you going to the village, James?" answered Trump; "if so, I'll go with you in a minute."

"Dunno, sir. I foller your directions," said James; "Mr. Grippe said I would get my horders from you."

Wondering what this could mean, Trumpley crossed the stile and met his mother on the little lawn. She was snipping off some late roses for the dinner-table.

"Why, Trump," she said, advancing to meet him, "what is the matter? You are nearly two hours before your time."

"Nothing, Mother; only we have to move. Mr. Merton wants the Cottage."

"Mr. Merton?"

"Yes; Mr. Radcliffe Merton. I told him we would vacate it to-morrow, and he said he would like to have it this afternoon. Mr. Grippe was kind enough to send me down in his carriage. I will go to Merton and get a van, and come back in a cab. We can go to Gloucester easily before dark, and to-morrow we will find a house. I

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am sorry to take you away from your flowers, Mother ; but it was not my fault."

Mrs. Wailes had the roses in a dainty little apron ; she let go the corners as Trump spoke, and the flowers were scattered over the green lawn. She walked over them towards the house.

"Away with you, Trump!" she said ; "you can tell me about it as we go. I will pack up while you are gone. Trump, agree with the man about the price ; you are such a reckless vagabond! And you think you are rolling in wealth, with your twelve hundred a year. What letter is that?"

"Oh, I forgot it, Mother," answered Trump. "It is from Mr. Grippe, I suppose ; James gave it to me at the stile. I'm off!"

"Stop, sir! Let us see what — Hey! it is quite an epistle. Let us sit down here and read. What a nice hand he writes! It is far better than yours, Trump."

Spreading the sheet out upon her lap, the good lady read:

"*Dear Madam* :— The late Mr. Trumpley entrusted me with certain moneys before his death, with written instructions, which may now be carried out. Your compliance with some provisions is needful ; and one of these provisions is, that you shall reside at Halidon. Your apartments over the South Terrace have been carefully kept as you left them, and they now wait your return. I beg you to occupy them at once — this evening. I send the carriage for you, and the spring cart will be at Rose Cottage before you will have packed your trunks. Mr. Trumpley Wailes' room is also prepared, and his occupation of it is also a part of these instructions. At the proper time I will produce these documents, and hope to satisfy you that I have faithfully carried out your brother's wishes.

"I may add, that Mr. Radcliffe Merton's rather sudden notice to vacate Rose Cottage had nothing whatever to do with the arrangement. I had prepared my household for your arrival before I left Halidon this morning.

"I have the honor to be, dear Madam,

"Very respectfully your obed't servant,

"ANTHONY GRIPPE."

Mother and son looked at each other in mute bewilderment.

"What does this mean, Trump?"

"What does this mean, Mother?"

And they glared at each other again.

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"My son," said Mrs. Wailes, "you have not done well in concealing from me your real feelings."

'Concealing from you, Mother!" answered Trump, with a guilty blush; "what can you mean?"

"If you have known, or even suspected that Mr. Grippe was stark mad, you should have told me. You must have seen some symptoms of insanity before this proof arrived. What has he said to you?"

"Nothing about this; I am utterly at a loss to account for it. May I read the note? Thank you, ma'am. 'Mr. Trumpley Wailes' room!' I have no room; I can never have a room at Halidon."

"Has Mr. Grippe said anything about Mabel to you, sir?"

"No, ma'am — yes, ma'am — that is — I don't know. He said he would help me find some one. I told him it was too late —"

"Too late! What in the world do you mean, Trumpley?"

"I mean that Miss Grahame has already made her choice, or has allowed herself to be chosen by — by — another —"

"Another what? Another great booby! Another? You are as mad as Mr. Grippe. Another? Oh you precious simpleton! What have you said to her?"

"Not a word, Mother."

"Who is Another, Trump?"

"Mr. Clinton. It is all right, Mother. He is a gentleman; he has plenty of money; he is good-looking. I like him, and I am resolved to conquer the foolish repugnance I feel. He invited me to-day to begin my week at Beechwood to-night, and I accepted. I am going there, with your permission —"

"And I am going to Halidon. I will find out the bottom of this Another business before I sleep."

"Oh, Mother, I entreat you do not even hint to Miss Grahame that I have indulged in these foolish dreams! Please let events take their course; it was only a passing fancy —"

"If I did not know you were telling stories I'd knock you down, sir. Come, help me pack up — you infant! Another! Oh you wretch!"

Mr. Wailes followed her submissively. There was some very hasty packing done. Trump's portmanteau was put in the carriage, the spring-cart was laden with trunks and boxes, and they bade adieu to Rose Cottage by starlight. The keys were sent to Merton Park by Milly Galt, who blundered along the lane with her apron to her eyes. She also had a neat little note from Mrs. Wailes to Miss Lucy, in which she regretted that she had not sooner known Mr. Radcliffe's wish to have the Cottage, and enclosing the rent up to the end of the

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quarter, and announcing the fact that she would be at Halidon, where she hoped to meet her and dear Sybil, with her compliments to the Squire, her love to Sybil, and was very affectionately hers, Edith Trumpley Wailes.

"It seems to me, Trump," quoth Mrs. Wailes, as they lost sight of Milly, "that Miss Lucy can detect a striking resemblance now between Mr. Radcliffe Merton and Another."

"Whom do you mean, Mother?"

"I mean that amiable quadruped from Berkshire that the Squire persists in showing to all his visitors, and that grunts with so much satisfaction when you fill his trough."

"Don't be too hard on Rad, Mother. He was in a great rage, and I am afraid I tantalised him. Poor Rad! he is eaten up with selfishness. I said some hard things to him, as he enraged me by his insolent tones. He was constantly implying that Mr. Grippe had made a mistake in clothing me with such powers, and that I was insufferably conceited on account of my sudden promotion."

"I hope you did not quarrel, Trump," said his mother.

"Oh no! Rad Merton will not quarrel with me very seriously."

"Why not?"

"Because he knows I can polish him off. We have tried the gloves and the foils to his entire satisfaction. I never knew Rad to engage in a contest where the result was doubtful."

"That remark will match my reference to the gentleman from Berkshire," said Mrs. Wailes. "Radcliffe is a scamp, Trumpley."

"Yes, a regular scamp."

"We will let him off now with no worse title. I hope you and he will be better strangers hereafter. You never saw his mother? Well, I will tell you a secret, Trump, which must go no farther. She is hateful!"

Mrs. Wailes said this so emphatically that the carriage stopped. They looked up, and found that the lodge-gates of Halidon were swinging open. Trump alighted and took his portmanteau.

"You will make my excuses to Mr. Grippe, Mother. A previous engagement, you know; Mr. Clinton invited me as I passed Beechwood this morning."

"I suppose I might say two previous engagements," whispered Mrs. Wailes; "Mr. Clinton's engagement to Another — or did you say there was an engagement?"

"I never asked, ma'am."

"Well, suppose you ask him to-night. Do, Trump, just to satisfy my curiosity."

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"Not I, Mother."

"I suppose you will let me hear from you occasionally; and I suppose I may drop you a line occasionally from Halidon, that is if you take any interest in Halidon?"

"While you are there, Mother, I take great interest."

"And Another? Good-night, Trump. Come nearer, my son, and let me whisper. You poor goose, you milksop, you darling boy, don't be such a blockhead! There is no such thing in the wide world as Another; and if there were, I'd — poison him. Good-night."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The Liberal Trio.

There was a Liberal Club at Merton, and Mr. Podd was president. When Mrs. Wailes was dismissing Trumpley at Halidon gates, Mr. Podd was calling the meeting to order. It was not a very large meeting, which was fortunate, as the accommodations were limited. The hall was a loft over the carriage-builder's shop, and the rent paid by the club for the premises was not in the coin of the realm, but in gin, which was imbibed by the proprietor of this chamber, who was also excused from the payment of the weekly dues. As a matter of pure courtesy, Mr. Spokes was also furnished with pipes and tobacco, paid for out of the club treasury, though this was not in the original contract. It was a touching sight, and regularly recurring, to see Mr. Spokes select a pipe, fill it, light it, and lay down tuppence on the table, and to see the rude grace wherewith the president pushed back the coins, saying, "None o' that 'ristocratic nonsense, Spokes! Pipes and baccy is free to you." And the picture was complete when Mr. Spokes slipped the money back into his greasy pocket, with a murmur of dissent.

The furniture was rather useful than ornamental. The room was Mr. Spokes' dormitory, and a rickety bedstead in one corner made seats for four members, or if the meeting was full, for six. Inverted paint-kegs, the seats of defunct carriages, some of them cushioned, with the moss and hair sticking out of odd holes, the hubs of damaged wheels set on end, and two chairs, comprised the remainder of the furniture, excepting the table, which belonged to the adjoining

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tap-room, and was lent by the obliging publican who furnished the beer, gin and pipes.

On the present occasion the meeting was unusually interesting, as a stranger was present, introduced by Mr. Podd as Munseer Blowell from France. Munseer Blowell was a sallow gentleman, with a black moustache covering his mouth. He spoke very good English, and in a little address with which he acknowledged the introduction, he assured the club that the thrones on the Continent were all tottering, and that the true proprietors of all things, the producers, were about to take possession of the world. There were some obstacles to be removed, such as standing armies, policemen and bloated aristocrats, and the plain duty of each son of freedom was to thin out the ranks of these enemies of progress whenever occasion served. He had great hopes of England, as the workingmen of that nation were brave to a fault, and only needed the stringent rules of continental organizations to make them thoroughly efficient.

Munseer Blowell had not been a practical workingman; his hands were too white and delicate. But he had always been a philosopher. The best efforts of his useful life had been directed against governments and priestcraft. His native country was Belgium, where ignorant people were ground to the dust by effete superstition. He moved to freer Germany, and spent years in literary work, and other years in financial operations, some of which had not been successful, because absurd laws forbade forgery. And now he had come to freest England, and had identified himself with the down-trodden yeomanry of that land.

It was a curious fact that two institutions, which priest-ridden people asserted had been possessed by primal man in Eden, to wit, the Sabbath and the marriage relation, were the occasion of the most flagrant wrongs under which modern humanity groaned. The Sunday laws of England were huge blots on her statute-books; the tyranny of the marriage-tie and the difficulties in the way of divorce were an outrage upon the nineteenth century; and if Mr. Blowell should finally fail in his efforts to abolish these absurdities from England, his purpose was to migrate to America, where free love, free thought, free theft, and free speech held perpetual carnival. The men who were in power there were abreast of the age.

There was some desultory debate after the orator concluded his address, and the meeting adjourned. The receipts of the evening proving inadequate to the outlay for gin, beer and tobacco, Mr. Blowell claimed the privilege of contributing three shillings to

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the fund, which made the sum in hand equal to the publican's demands. Mr. Spokes extinguished the candle and crawled into his couch, merely kicking off his boots. The club separated; Mr. Blowell, who was going to Gloucester, accompanied by Mr. Podd and another member, walking up the main road, by the margin of Merton's Brook.

Arrived at the mill, they turned aside to rest on the bench that set against the wall. A fierce mastiff came out of his kennel, rattling his chain and growling ferociously. Mr. Podd walked up to him and kicked him in the ribs, invoking sundry blessings upon his head at the same time for "his cussed noise." The dog crawled submissively back into his box, and the trio peacefully continued their discourse. The third Liberal was a locksmith from Gloucester, who had been to Merton village repairing a defective lock that defied the skill of the local workmen. It was on the door of the town-hall, and was complicated.

"What aristocrats have you, my friend," said Mr. Blowell, "that are ripest for destruction?"

"They're all ripe enough," answered Podd. "Wailes is the ripest, I dessay."

"Wailes?" said Mr. Blowell.

"Yes; he is the worst of the lot. He was a cadger only a month back, now he is a banker; but he was as good a 'ristocrat when he was a cadger as he is now."

"Seems to me," said the locksmith, "that the new man at Beechwood is bad as any."

"Clinton?" replied Podd. "Yes, he is another. He's got a couple o' niggers — reg'ler slaves; one of 'em told me so hisself. I'd like to skin him if I could!"

"I fixed his locks when he came," continued the other. "He has a chest in the hall that weighs a ton. I s'pose he keeps his plate in it. I mended that lock too."

"What sort o' lock?" said Podd, in a husky whisper.

"Werry peculiar; the tumbler falls unexpected like. I worked two hours on that cussed lock before I found out where the hitch was. The key was lost; I made the new one."

"Why didn't you make *two* new ones?" said Podd, with a chuckle. "If you had a second key it would be conwenient, s'posin' he should lose t'other. He! he!"

"I could make another fast enough," answered the smith; "or for that matter, I could open his chest if he lost his key. I know the

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trick on it now: lift the tumbler a bit apast the half turn, and then shoot the bolt. I could do it in the dark. Was two hours on that cussed job."

"What could you do it with, Johnny?"

"These!" and he produced a bunch of skeleton-keys. "The lock on the town-hall was worser than any lock at Beechwood."

"My friends — my goot friends," interposed Munseer Blowell, "it is indiscreet to talk of such matters in such a place. Who may not be behind this excellent stone wall? Let us walk; on the open road one is safe, if one does not speak too loudly. Your conversation is very interesting — decidedly!"

The three worthies left the shadow of the mill. The dog came out as they departed, received another affectionate kick, and crept back, with a smothered whine.

"My goot friends," said Munseer Blowell, when they were fairly on the road, "what is this that you converse about? A chest containing plate, owned by an aristocrat, and secured by a lock at which you laugh!"

"You would not laugh," replied the smith, "if you had bin two hours trying at it. The cussed tumbler fell just where it ought to rise."

"But you know the trick now — is it not? In the dark, with those curious little wires, you could — see if the plate was secure?"

"Easy enough. That is, if the house was empty."

"It is as good as empty," said Podd — "only Clinton and the nigger. I dessay me and Munseer could amuse them, if they should happen to be awake, while you tried your wires. This lane goes past Beechwood and comes out in t'other road. S'pose we walk this way? Must be past midnight."

Munseer took a watch from his pocket, touched a spring, and it sounded four musical notes. "One and three-quarters," he said, replacing his watch. "It is a well-known fact that sleepers repose more soundly between midnight and four o'clock than at any other time. What reason have you for thinking the heavy chest contains plate, my goot friend?"

"Got no other use for it," answered the locksmith; "besides, it is lined with welwet. The tumbler falls suddent, a bit apast the half turn."

"Suppose we should look after this plate," suggested Munseer, "and fierce dogs should assault us, for instance — have you any weapon, my goot friend?"

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Podd took out his pruning-knife and opened the blade. It was broad and strong, and six inches in length. "I could find a dog's gizzard with this, if he was no bigger than a man."

"Very goot! And I have this," and he produced a long dagger from his bosom, "which is still more effective. We need not fear the dogs. Our goot friend here could arrange the tumblers, without any unnecessary noise, and we could remove the plate to some place of security, where the locks would be stronger; we would make three equal parcels, and each one could take care of his own portion. My goot friend has not spoken of the outer door, however."

"The main door has a old-fashioned lock — big wards. A handy fellow could open that with a crow-bar."

"And after that should be opened," said Munseer —"is there perhaps another door within?"

"Werry possible," answered the locksmith, sarcastically; "he's got more money than he can spend, and mebbe he has put up another door inside the hall. There was only one door last week."

"My goot friends," said the orator, stopping in the middle of the lane and facing his companions, "this aristocrat is holding our property in his chest. It is ours, because we represent the artisans who made it, the miners who dug the ores, the smelters who labored amid fierce heat to purify the metal. And now we, the true owners, because we belong to the many, are tramping through dark lanes, while he, the solitary usurper, reposes on his luxurious couch. We will not disturb him, but we will take our metal and partition it fairly, and when we find others — our brother workingmen — in need, we will gladly give them their just portion. Think how pure the joy will be to aid the struggling victims of cruel laws and customs! To brave men like you I may express the regret that I feel, and which my sympathising soul tells me *you* feel, that this act of reclaiming our own involves no risk, nothing to prove our manhood — only to remove some curious tumblers which my goot friend here constructs and defies, and then silently convey the gaudy trappings of aristocracy to some secure locality, where we can melt them and fashion them into ingots ready for coinage. We will not harm anything but dogs —"

"He hasn't got no dogs," said Podd.

"Alas! then it is a bagatelle, is it not? Should the plate be heavy, we have strong shoulders. In this sylvan solitude there are no policemen. Nothing but prudence deters us from going boldly and demanding the restoration. Why should we make clamor when it is only to take and go?"

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"Suppose some one should be awake in the 'ouse?" suggested the smith. "You can't shoot heavy bolts without some noise."

"The night is dark, my goot friend," replied Munseer, "and if we fail to accomplish our purpose, we can retire in safety. All that we need is caution."

"They *do* say," muttered the locksmith, "that people walk about Beechwood o' nights that have been dead and buried many a year."

"Bah!" replied the orator, in high disdain; "these are tales to frighten children. My goot friend Podd, what mansion is this? One could hide in that grove secure."

"This is Beechwood," answered Podd. "It's easy enough to say 'Bar!' Munseer, but I swear I saw *something* move under them trees a week ago and melt away into the air. I'd rather tackle Halidon than this place any time after dark. But I'm not afeard! This is the stable-gate. It is locked, but we can lift it off the hinges. So now remember, if we have to cut for it, to come down the drive and out here, and then keep to the right."

"Softly!" said Monsieur, as they filed through the gate; "the house is here—quiet as the tomb. Is your knife open, my goot friend?"

CHAPTER XLIX.

TIGER.

The attractive quadruped that inhabited the kennel at the mill was a large, yellow mastiff, between whom and Podd Miss Lucy Merton would have detected a resemblance. There was the same strong underjaw, projecting, the same cruel blink in the eyes, the same stump of a nose, with wide nostrils, the same yellow teeth, visible when the thin lips parted. And the tanned hide of the floriculturist was not unlike the yellow hair of Tiger, who had a sleek coat and looked altogether more respectable than Mr. Podd in his ordinary attire.

It is very likely that these two animals formed their mutual attachment upon some recognised attributes that were common. The outward ugliness for which they were both distinguished was one bond of sympathy; the universal antagonism to all other living things was common to both. Tiger's life was spent in darting out of his kennel, and as far as his chain would permit, at everything that passed.

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There was no creature that Podd regarded with favor; he scowled habitually at all things sublunary, and at the sun, moon, and stars.

The good understanding that subsisted betwixt the biped and the quadruped was due to Tiger's veneration for Podd. The gardener threw him bones and crusts at such times as he took his luncheon on the long bench at the mill, and the dog received the morsels as dainties from the king's table; for some dim recognition of royalty hedged about the man, in the dog's perceptions, and he took the kicks and objurgations which Podd dispensed liberally as part of his rights as a loyal subject. It was a curious fact that Podd had no touch of fear in his intercourse with Tiger, who was a terror to everybody else. When in his most savage moods, and when the miller dared not come within reach of him, Podd would roll him over with naked hands, pulling his bits of ears, cuff and swear at him with perfect composure and with perfect impunity.

On the night when the liberal trio rested on the mill-bench, Tiger saw and recognised the king, but felt bound to rush at the courtiers that accompanied him. He rather expected the kicks. While they remained in earshot he reposed with his head on his paws; when they arose to depart he flew out again, took another kick, meekly, and returned to his kennel.

Tiger had not had his supper, and he was restless. As the retreating footsteps of the three worthies died away, he came out again, and lay on the ground blinking at the stars. The habit of the gardener, when he occupied the bench, was to eat, and Tiger was accustomed to look for crumbs. The bench was beyond the length of the chain, and he could only look wistfully in that direction. Then a cat came creeping from the mill; she was going down to the race for a drink. Tiger flew at her of course, tugging at his chain. Grimalkin, with thickened tail, took to a tree, and as the dog stretched out after her, his cruel eyeballs projecting, the staple came out of the box and Tiger was free. He tore up to the tree, snapping viciously but harmlessly at the cat secure in the upper branches; then sniffed around the bench, and finding nothing, trotted down into the road, his stump of a tail pointing to the quiet heavens and his chain rattling behind him.

Podd had drawn out the staple one day, and when he put it back he had not driven it home. Each time that the dog rushed out of his kennel he had loosened it a little, and the last savage dash at Grimalkin liberated him. He took the trail of his monarch and sped along the secluded lane, starting on his expedition just as Podd lifted the gate from its hinges at Beechwood.

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CHAPTER L.

DORADO AGAIN.

Mr. Radcliffe Merton quit the bank after his interview with Wailes, and passing down Queen Street, encountered a certain Mr. Consol, a stock-jobber. Mr. Consol had made "little operations" for Mr. Merton once and again, and had proved himself quick and shrewd, and the young squire had a good deal of confidence in his ability. There was not much stock-jobbing done at Gloucester, still the Dorado had been advertised liberally, and Mr. Consol might be able to do something.

"Oh, Consol," said Radcliffe, "I was thinking of you. Have you ever heard of the Dorado Mine?"

"Heard of it? — of course. Are you in it, Mr. Merton?"

"Ya-as, a little," answered Merton. "Fact is, I went in too deeply, not expecting the call. I paid the allotment price, and now I am short of the needful tin to meet this sudden demand. Wonder if you could find a customer? I almost think I would sell out."

Mr. Consol had a customer. "How many, Mr. Merton? Twenty-five hundred? Suppose you leave the certificates with me?"

"Hang it! no. I'll take the evening train, I think, and place them in London. No difficulty there; can get five shillings advance probably."

"I'll give you a cheque for two shillings advance," said Mr. Consol. "I had an inquiry to-day, and will buy your lot at a risk, if you like."

"Done!—away with you!" replied Radcliffe. "Come to your office and write your cheque."

Mr. Radcliffe was in quite a serene frame, with the cheque in his pocket, as he drove down the road to Merton. He did not know that Mr. Consol was busy transferring his shares to Matthew Merton, Esq., at the very moment that the hopeful nephew was chuckling over his good fortune in "getting out." But it had happened that the Squire, reading the florid notice in the *Gloucester Palladium*, had decided to invest all the money he could raise in "Dorado," provided he could get the shares at anything near the allotment price. Mr. Consol had the Squire's order to "pick up" just the amount Radcliffe held, and when he entered the post-office he met the Squire at the door, and announced the purchase.

Squire Mat was very much elated, as he had "read up" on Dorado,

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and carried little slips cut from newspapers referring to this "valuable property" in his pockets, which he consulted at odd times with great interest. The original announcement made by Radcliffe, at the Halidon dinner, was intended to operate upon Mr. Grippe and Sir Henry Walton, as the good Squire was generally impecunious; and anyhow, Mr. Rad did not desire to earn his "commission" for inducing subscriptions at his uncle's expense. The money he had decided to invest in the mine was really Sybil's, and the profits on the venture were to be hers.

"I have bought your shares, Mr. Merton," said Consol, when they met.

"Well done! How many?"

"Twenty-five hundred. I am just mailing the order for transfer; you will have the certificates in two days. But you will need two or three thousand pounds more in a day or two, as the instalment will be due."

"All ready, Consol," answered the Squire; "I can get the money from Grippe. Shall I give you a cheque now?"

"As you please; to-morrow will do. Shall you be in town to-morrow?"

"Certainly; I will come on purpose. I am going to meet an appointment now, and am tardy as usual. Good morning."

The Squire's appointment was with Mr. Clinton; he had promised to take luncheon at Beechwood. As he rode rapidly away from Gloucester he tried to calculate the addition he was about to make to Sybil's little fortune. Some of the papers predicted an advance of a pound per share after the payment of the second instalment; others prophesied that the third instalment would never be called, as the ore was coming up by cart-loads, and there would be dividends within a few months. The Squire was not accustomed to such mental labor, and he dismissed the subject from his mind for the present. One thing was clear: Sybil would have a good lot of money when he sold out.

Memnon threw the gates open as the Squire cantered up, and took charge of his horse at the door. Mr. Clinton was in the hall, and welcomed his guest very cordially. "My dear Squire," he said, "I am delighted to see you. I have ordered Phillis to put on the chops, and in ten minutes all will be ready. Meantime, will you come to the stables and look at the ponies?"

"The very thing! Have you had the shoes changed?"

"Yes, sir. I drove to Merton yesterday and found your smith. I

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just said Squire Merton did not approve of the ponies' feet, and told him to do for them as you would order if you were present. He growled at Gloucester quite viciously, and he informs me that it will take two or three months to get Baby's feet in shape again. But he has undertaken the cure."

"Colts' hoofs, you see," said the Squire; "these blockheads play the deuce with a colt's hoof. They should not be pared at all. Come on; we will have a look at them. I am half an hour late; have I kept you waiting?"

"No, sir—"

"See here, Clinton, you must not say 'yes, sir' and 'no, sir.'"

"What shall I say then?"

"Say 'yes' and 'no.' You were talking to Sybil the other day, and you kept saying 'Yes, ma'am.' It's perfectly horrid!"

"Surely you did not wish me to say 'Yes, miss'?" answered Clinton.

"No; that would be still worse. Say plain 'yes' when you are talking to equals. You might put in the 'Sir' if addressing a duke, unless you were intimate with him, and in that case it would be indecorous. 'Yes, sir,' belongs to servants; don't rob them of their lingo."

"Did Miss Sybil say all that?" said Clinton, ruefully.

"No; certainly not. She is a goose! She flew in her father's face for criticising your Americanism."

"She has done a little in that line herself," answered Clinton. "I wonder how long it will take me to get civilised? She tells me I say 'Phaginny.'"

"Of course!" roared the Squire—"ho! ho! But never mind. Ah! the sly vixen did not tell me she had been putting you through your paces. Was she hard on you, eh?"

"No, sir—that is—no. She talks so beautifully herself that her scolding was musical."

"Yes, yes. Isn't she a duck!" answered the Squire, his eyes moistening. "She spent an hour last night arguing with me about the propriety of your manner of speech. She defended you in your absence if she scolds you when present.—Ho! here are the ponies. You must have a window over the manger, Clinton. Ventilation. Ho, Baby! Her coat is like velvet. Your groom has not been so liberal with t'other."

"I believe I must have the credit of Baby's glossy coat," said Clinton, blushing. "In Virgin-ia I used to curry my horse myself, and I was trying my hand on Baby this morning. She is fond of me, and I like to curry her."

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"You're all right if you can fall in love with a horse," answered the Squire. "What gate is this? Oh, I remember; this is the lane to the mill. You must change those antiquated hinges, Clinton; no use in locks, when a stout fellow could lift t'other end off. There's the bell; I must wash my hands. Come on; I will not let your chops get cold."

Captain Lennox had added an enclosed porch to the main front of the house, which diversified the plain lines, and furnished pleasant seats in mild weather. After luncheon Mr. Clinton and his guest sat here with their pipes, the former meditating the construction of a new vocabulary, and the latter thinking of his fortunate investment in mining stock.

"Do you know anything about this Dorado Mine, Clinton?" said the Squire.

"I have seen the prospectus," replied Clinton.

"Did you take any shares?"

"Oh no."

The Squire wriggled in his seat; there was an uncomfortable intonation in Clinton's voice. "You have so many schemes in America," said the Squire, "that you are not satisfied with moderate interest, I suppose."

"Rather, I try to be certain of the security of the principal," answered Clinton.

"Well, the Dorado seems to be secure enough," and the Squire pulled out his newspaper slips. "Look at this."

"I have seen that. But I had investigated Dorado in London before the Gloucester paper mentioned it. I think it is — a humbug!"

"A what?" said the Squire.

"A humbug, a fraud. I would not give a shilling a share for the Dorado."

"Will you take the trouble to read the names?" said the Squire, horror-stricken. "I mean the American names."

"I have read them."

"But this," and the Squire laid his finger on the list of supporters and endorsers. "Surely you will say nothing against this name. No American can say anything against this."

"Well, Squire," replied Clinton, tranquilly, "I will say no more. It is not impossible that there is a silver-mine in Nevada very productive, and that Dorado is its name. I have not been there; but I should be very sorry to think any friend of mine had put good money this speculation."

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"Why, it is selling at a profit this very day."

"Very likely. I suppose the managers will not let it collapse until they get two or three more instalments paid. It may keep up until Christmas, or it may melt away into thin air this week. Sir Henry had some, but he sold out, I think."

"I wonder if Grippe took any?" said Mr. Merton.

"I fancy not. Wailes has charge of such matters, and he would not be caught with chaff of that description."

"Rad spoke in high terms of it t'other night," observed the Squire; "he and Trump generally think alike."

Clinton was silent. The Squire's pipe was out, and he laid it on the seat beside him as he rose to depart.

"The truth is, Clinton," said he, as he buttoned his coat, "I have bought some of that infernal stock. I begin to feel uneasy about it now. I met Consol in Gloucester to-day, and he told me he had picked up twenty-five hundred shares for me. I'll sell out to-morrow, by Jupiter! Baby's money, too! Come! will you ride to Merton Park with me and dine without ceremony?"

"Many thanks, Squire. Please allow me to hold the invitation; this evening I expect a visitor. Are you going? Memnon, bring Mr. Merton's horse."

Memnon opened the gates for the Squire's egress, and when he returned to the stable, he found Mr. Clinton drawing the girth of the saddle on the back of Phaginny. "Law! Mars Clint, let me fix de hoss," said Memnon. "You done got snaffle on. Dat hoss wants de stiff bit."

"Never mind, Memnon," said Mr. Clinton. "Open the gates for me. I will return in an hour," and he leaped into the saddle and went off in a gallop.

Mr. Consol was in his office. Seeing a cavalier in the street before his door, he came out. Mr. Clinton beckoned him to the curb. "Mr. Consol," he said, "I wish to make a purchase of some shares — twenty-five hundred Dorado. I want the identical shares Mr. Merton bought to-day. If you see him to-morrow, buy them for me at a profit. What did he pay?"

"Never reveal customers' secrets, Mr. Clinton," answered the cautious stock-jobber. "He has not paid anything; not due until to-morrow."

"Of course not, I forgot. Well, keep my secret too; I particularly desire to be unknown in this transaction. If you can manage to get those shares for me, say at two shillings advance, I will pay you treble commissions."

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"Can't do that, Mr. Clinton; commissions are regular. If the Squire wishes to sell to-morrow—"

"See here, Mr. Consol; suppose you take a cab and go to Merton Park this afternoon. You don't have to mention names, but you can offer Mr. Merton two shillings advance for authority to transfer his shares to you. You will want the money? I will go to Browler Brothers and get it now."

"Time enough for that when you get the shares. Cab will cost about ten shillings—"

"Here is a sovereign. You understand the case, do you? I want the same shares Squire Merton bought to-day, and no others; and I must not be known in the transaction at all. If the Squire consent to sell, you can take the blanks with you and get the transfer signed this evening, paying Mr. Merton the difference. You don't seem satisfied; what is the obstacle?"

"I suppose it is all right, Mr. Clinton; but you are a comparative stranger to me, and—"

"Come to Browler Brothers. Hi, Sonny! hold my horse."

Sonny was a ragged whelp who was busily engaged in rolling another ragged whelp in the dusty street. He sprang to Phaginny's head and seized the bridle. Mr. Consol followed Clinton to the bank.

"Mr. Choppy," said Clinton, as the smiling cashier approached, "a word in private, if you please. Mr. Consol has an order from me for an investment. Please tell him if my cheque will be honored for—say ten thousand pounds."

"Yes, sir; or for twenty thousand either," said Mr. Choppy.

Mr. Consol hailed a cab and left Gloucester five minutes later.

CHAPTER LI.

Prince Prettyman.

Doctor Maguire had been busy for a week or so. There were some cases of low fever in Merton, chiefly among the poorer villagers; and as these did not deal much in fees, the Doctor was particularly attentive to them. Squire Merton, who knew of the practitioner's kindness to his poorer tenants, beset him with daily

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invitations to the Park to "dinner and a rubber," but Maguire had really not been able to accept his hospitality. Besides his Merton "pashints," he had a mysterious patient somewhere near Gloucester, and the old gig was seen on that road nearly every day, Jalap trotting along with so decided an air of business that the fee was no doubt promptly paid by that customer at least.

The Squire met the gig near the entrance to his own grounds on the same afternoon and at about the same hour that Mr. Consol started from Gloucester. "Hillo, Doctor!" said he. "Glad to meet you. Are you coming to dine to-day?"

"Faix, Squire," replied the Doctor, "I think I will. More betoken, I have not had a dacent meal for a week."

"How are the Merton people, Doctor?"

"Getting along.—You ould ragamuffin, ye've got your ear in limbo again!" This last remark was addressed to Jalap as the Doctor descended from his perch and adjusted the headstall.

"Why don't you saw off that horse's ear, Doctor?" said the Squire.

"It's the only divarsion the poor brute has," answered the Doctor. "If he didn't look so comical, I wouldn't mind it. Get along, Jalap!"

"Seven o'clock, Maguire," said Mr. Merton, as they parted.

"I'll be punctual. Bedad, I'll give Miss Lucy another chance," he added as soon as the Squire was out of earshot; "and I must get back in time to dress too. If she don't find some unlucky resemblance, maybe I'll win this time."

The Doctor stopped at Beechwood. His patient there was apparently in ordinary health, as she was sitting in the large drawing-room conversing with Mr. Clinton. It should have been stated earlier in this history that Doctor Maguire was a member of the Royal College, and had achieved an extensive reputation in London before he buried himself in the little village of Merton, where he had prepared the just proportion of the inhabitants for *their* burial, *secundum artem*, for the past ten or twelve years. Mr. Clinton had applied to a famous practitioner in London, shortly after taking Beechwood, for professional services, and was surprised to learn that so skilful a physician was within easy reach of him. The city magnate spoke of Maguire in terms of such extravagant commendation that Mr. Clinton was entirely satisfied to put the case in his hands. The ailment was purely mental, and as the Doctor was groping in the dark, knowing nothing of the previous history of his patient, he always entered the gates at Beechwood with certain misgivings.

There was some secret between Clinton and the lady that was

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carefully guarded. They never addressed each other by name when the Doctor was present. Mr. Clinton had informed him at the outset that he had a kinswoman at his house, living in great seclusion, and suffering from mental depression, and had requested the Doctor to keep the secret of her residence there from the gossips of the vicinity. He hoped when she was well enough to present her formally to his friends, but was himself ignorant of the cause of her distress. She was restless at night, and was a somnambulist. He had awakened her suddenly the day before he called the Doctor in, and she had preserved a dazed appearance and manner ever since. This was all.

The Doctor asked a few questions, suggested some changes in diet, and going out to his gig, was followed by Clinton.

"I think I perceive a decided improvement to-day," he said, "and if you can discover any method by which you can awaken her interest in sublunary things, she will mend rapidly."

"What do you mean, Doctor?" asked Clinton, eagerly.

"I mane if you can give her something or somebody to love who will love her — not a great masculine body like yourself, but a gurrill. Why the divil can't you marry a young woman and try the experiment!"

"Marry!"

"Certainly! It's a risky operation, I know; but if you get a good-natured young woman, the risk will not be great — I mane to yourself. To the pashint I am sure it will be beneficial."

"I know a young lady, Doctor," said Clinton, thoughtfully, "who would exactly suit your description; but —"

"But what?"

"But she may object to the arrangement."

"Is that all? Lave it to me; I'll find one to shoot. Bedad, I know one this minnit! Can you jabber French?"

"Oh yes; French and German are as easy to me as English."

"It's all settled, thin. I'll put you in the way at oncet. I must see ould Grippe about it."

"Don't make any rash engagements, Doctor. Jewhillikin, Doctor, I'm a regular blockhead!"

"Well, it's a healthy sign when you know your disase, and you are in a fair way to be cured. What is it?"

"Why, I can get the very lady you describe without the least trouble. Are you going past Halidon? Really! Give me a seat in your gig that far, and I will arrange everything at once."

"Ah, you sly rashkill!" said Doctor Maguire, after dropping Mr.

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Clinton at the lodge-gates; "you are afther ould Grippe's French daughter, are you? Well, good luck to you. Get along, Jalap! Confound your skull, you've got your ear down again! So! I'll put a stitch or two in your ear, me boy, some fine day. And if you get that black-eyed French gurrill, Mr. Clinton, it's my belafe that she will put several large fleas in *your* ear now and thin."

Mr. Clinton, hearing none of these remarks, entered the spacious park with an elastic step. He did not seem to dread fleas, as he shook hands with the young ladies, who received him with evident pleasure. Five minutes after his arrival Heloïse had him at the piano, doing his half of a duetto manfully.

Leaving her at the instrument when he had inveigled her into solo performances, he sat down by Mabel and resumed the vernacular.

"Fair cousin, I have found some mission-work for you," he said, "and I hope you will engage in it at once — to-morrow."

"Is it in a foreign field?" said Mabel, laughing.

"No; quite near you — at Beechwood. There is one there who sorely needs gentle ministrations. I am too rough, unpolished, half-humanised to do any good. Will you come?"

"Can you refer to the dear old lady I saw there in the conservatory? Alas! I promised to see her the next day, but Heloïse was ill, and I could not leave her."

"Yes. She is suffering some mental derangement that I cannot understand. I have theories, but do not know enough to act upon them. I am afraid to refer to her past history, which I know in great part, but you can do it safely. You will learn to love her, and she will love you without learning. In a few days I will tell you — nay, I will tell you now — she is Dora Lennox."

"Dora Trumpley!" said Mabel, a hundred fragmentary stories rushing upon her memory; "my dear Aunt Trumpley —"

"No! I cannot fathom the mystery; but when I called her Aunt Trumpley, she fairly shook with rage, and bade me never mention the name again."

"I will go as soon as Mr. Grippe comes," said Mabel. "My dear Aunt Dora! I will write to Papa to-night —"

"No; you must please wait a little. You must not tell Mr. Grippe either, or any one else. There is some terrible story in the past which we must unravel, you and I, and then we will know what is the true course. A day with her will reveal more to you than I have learned since I first discovered her. Ah, here comes Mademoiselle. You cannot come this evening, but as early as you will to-morrow.

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Ladies," he continued, in French, "I am desolated that I am obliged to leave you; but I expect a guest, and must return to prepare for his arrival. Au revoir!"

An hour later Mr. Grippe arrived. He limped up the drive, and the two girls fluttered out to meet him as soon as he was in sight. Heloïse took away his cane and gave him her shapely arm, and Mabel assisted him on the other side. It was evident that the old gentleman was a prime favorite.

"You are earlier than usual to-day, sir," said Mabel. "Are you quite well?"

"Quite well, indeed!" said Mr. Grippe; "of course I'm not. Never was quite well since I was born; but I am no worse than usual. Oh! this is far nicer than canes. How would you girls like to escort me in this fashion to Gloucester every day?"

"That would be perfect," said Heloïse, when Mabel translated the banker's proposition; "we would go to the shops and to the cathedral, while Monsieur was making money in the bank."

"And you gypsies would be turning the money into ducks and drakes. Mabel, sit down here and read this aloud to me. Heloïse, sit here on the other side. Read slowly, child, and when Heloïse does not understand, translate for her."

Mr. Grippe had required Trump to write a detailed account of his adventures in search of Blauvelt, suppressing names; and the youth had written very nearly the identical account given to the reader in a previous chapter. The reading was one of the most comical performances possible. Mabel recognised the chief actor in the first few lines of the narrative, and was enormously interested. At the end of each sentence, Heloïse flew at her like a raging French tigress for the translation. Mr. Grippe sat between them, preserving a stolid exterior and chuckling constantly.

"Where you got the feuilleton?" said Heloïse. "It is charming."

"I had it made to order," answered Mr. Grippe.

"What name the chevalier wiz pistolet?"

"Prince Prettyman; he is a stunner," replied Mr. Grippe. "I will bring him here and introduce him. What have you to say, Mabel?"

"Nothing," answered she, "except that he must leave his weapon behind him; I have a horror of them. How did he happen to be armed?"

"Oh, he does not tell that part. Well, he had a friend who was part Comanche and part alligator. This friend has lived in forests and caves and such unwholesome places, and generally shot a panther

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or bear for breakfast. When he heard that Prince Prettyman was going on a journey, he gave him the weapon, extorting his promise to carry it; so when he assaulted the ogre he happened to be armed. I have an idea that the blockhead would have done the same thing empty-handed."

Mabel translated this wonderful story for the benefit of Heloïse.

"And now, girls," said Mr. Grippe, "go dress for dinner. We shall have company to-night, a lady and a gentleman; I have sent the carriage for them. The gentleman will be Prince Prettyman, and the lady his mother; they will spend some time with us. I intend the Prince to marry one of you—perhaps both. Give me my cane, Heloïse. Away with you!"

"When Prince Prettyman comes," said Mabel to herself, as she arranged her tresses before her mirror, "if he is forgiving and gentle he may tell me this story over. And he may tell me about another exploit, when he rescued a poor drowning girl; and he may tell me what he did with the little curl he stole, when the poor girl was totally unconscious. But he can't marry both of us."

CHAPTER LII.

Stock Transfers.

Mr. Radcliffe Merton tossed the reins to Tim, and descended from the dog-cart. He felt very comfortable, and consequently amiable. He had passed through a very pleasant little quarrel with the best friend he had ever known, and the retrospect was cheering. He had parted with securities of doubtful value, and had the cheque in his pocket, and this was more cheering. He had a vague purpose to do personal damage to Trump and Clinton, especially the latter, and he had been revolving schemes in his mind all the afternoon to entangle him in a quarrel. He had "ordered Trump out of his house," and he knew Trump would get out at any cost. To-morrow he would take possession of Rose Cottage, and make it a bachelor's paradise.

He would go to Halidon to-morrow. That Grahame girl was positively distracting! When in London the other day he had hunted up the Reverend Edward; found him in Blackfriars, in a perfect hole.

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Had sent in his card; Reverend Edward was out. Called again next day; Reverend Edward was engaged, and hoped Mr. Merton would excuse him, which Mr. Merton concluded to do. But this rebuff only made him more determined to have Mabel. He had sent the Reverend Edward a letter of introduction from Sir Philip too. A nice sort of clergyman, to treat his brother's friend with rudeness! What the devil did it mean anyhow?

That Yankee impostor must be at the bottom of it. He would call at Beechwood and ask him. Ask him what? Berlin! Mr. Clinton was at Berlin a month ago, when he and Blauvelt were caught at some card-tricks. They were odd tricks, and Radcliffe left Germany sooner than he had intended. It was only cleaning out a young cub with more money than brains. If they had not done it, somebody else would. It was easy enough to explain, though a one-sided statement would be damaging. If the Reverend Edward had only seen him, and referred to the matter, he could at least have called that Stratton fellow to account. Strange that he did not know him at Berlin. But that beard disguised him. False beard probably. Must tell Uncle Mat about him. And there he comes.

The Squire rode soberly up the carriage-way and dismounted. As his horse was led away to the stables, he stood on the steps watching him.

"He nurses the off fore-foot, evidently. Hillo, Sam! lift the off fore-foot and see if anything is the matter."

"Yessir," answered the groom; "frog sore."

"The deuce! What will I ride to-morrow?"

"Be well by to-morrow, sir; only a scratch."

"Ah! he got that at Beechwood. They have been cutting down the bushes near the stables. Hay, Rad!"

"What did you say about Beechwood, Uncle?" said Rad, approaching; "I thought you mentioned Beechwood."

"Yes, Saladin stepped on a snag there; limps, you see. Doctor his foot, Sam. Do you know what to do?"

"Oh yes, sir. Be all right to-morrow."

"Clinton has improved Beechwood wonderfully, Rad. You must call on him; he is a thoroughbred. Gave me luncheon to-day; pickled oysters, just from America. Superb! By-the-bye, he made me feel very uncomfortable about that Dorado Mine. You have some?"

"Not I," answered Radcliffe; "sold out to-day."

"To-day! Pray, how much did you hold?"

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"Twenty-five hundred — got two shillings advance."

"And I bought them, you rascal," blurted out the Squire; "and Clinton, who seems to know all about it, evidently thinks it a fraud. He said he would not give two shillings a share."

"How the devil did you come to buy my shares, Uncle?" said Radcliffe, uneasily. "If I had known you had such an intention, I would have cautioned you —"

"Why, you recommended the stock to Sir Henry Walton t'other night! I heard you."

"Yes, sir," replied his nephew; "but Sir Henry is not my uncle — that is, they have called for another instalment, and mines are always risky. I'll have to go to London and sell out for you. Hang the Dorado! I was just congratulating myself on the sale. You see, sir," he continued, observing the Squire's blank countenance, "they always paint these Yankee schemes rose-colored, and you must add a little salt."

"Well, let us go in; Maguire is coming to dinner. Don't tell the girls about the stock. I bought it with — no matter. If Clinton had not mentioned it, I should have had no uneasiness."

"You seem to have great confidence in this Yankee, Uncle. It is my opinion that he is an impostor."

"Pooh! you are warped by British prejudice. Impostor! Why, he has twenty or thirty thousand pounds in Grippe's bank."

"He may have stolen it," replied Radcliffe. "I happen to know that his name is not Clinton. I knew him on the Continent by another name; so did Trump. Who is this coming up the drive in a cab? Consol, by Jupiter!"

Mr. Consol walked up the stone steps, nodded to the younger Merton, and requested a private interview with the Squire. He was ushered into the "office," the apartment in which the Squire received all his visitors who came on business. Rad was itching to know the stock-jobber's business, but his only chance was to pump his uncle after the private interview was over.

When they were seated in the office, Mr. Merton begged his visitor to state his business. Mr. Consol proceeded very cautiously.

"Did I understand you to say you wished the shares transferred to your own name?"

"Certainly. Why do you ask?"

"Because, if you should desire to sell out, you could just let the certificates stand transferred in blank —"

"Sell out?" said the Squire. "Not much chance of that, I fancy."

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"Why not? If you wished to buy a few hours ago, why should not some one else?"

"But I paid two shillings advance —"

"That is nothing. It was said at first there would be no call made after the allotment. To-day's paper has a letter from the superintendent in Nevada, in which he says they have struck a new lode. Just as like as not the shares will sell at four shillings premium to-morrow. If it were not for this instalment —"

"Four shillings a share! I should like to sell mine at that price," said Mr. Merton.

"Are you serious, Squire?" said Mr. Consol.

"Perfectly."

Mr. Consol drew some blank forms from his capacious pocket, and taking up a pen, rapidly filled one up and pushed it across the table to the Squire. "If you will sign that transfer, Squire," he said, coolly, "I will give you my cheque for two hundred and fifty pounds. There will be two commissions; but you can give me your cheque to-morrow for them."

"Did you tell any one that you had sold me this stock?" said the Squire.

"Never reveal my customers' business," answered Mr. Consol. "Of course I never mentioned you; but another customer applied to me to-day, shortly after you left Gloucester, and he was so hungry for the stock that I thought I would quietly take a cab and see if you would sell. Four shillings premium was his offer. Could get the stock in London, no doubt, easily enough, but — to tell the *whole* truth, I thought I might make a double commission. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" replied Mr. Merton, signing the transfer. "Consol, you are a brick! This two-fifty is clear profit then?"

"Except the two commissions, Squire. Ha! ha! ha! Good afternoon, Squire. No, thank you. Well, just one glass. Port? Prime! Must get back to telegraph my London correspondent to stop transfer and return the certificates. That saves his commission too. Ha! ha! ha! pretty good afternoon's work, and after business hours too."

"I say, Consol," said the Squire, "that was a neat trick you played me. You bought my nevvy's stock and sold it to me. Now, if he had known that I was the buyer he would not have sold, and if I had known he was the seller I should not have bought."

"Exactly, Squire. Ha! ha! ha! never reveal customers' business. *Good* afternoon, Squire. Not another drop. Well, just one drop.

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Must be off now, or my London man will be gone home. Lives at Paddington. That is the most astonishing Port I ever tasted. Don't come out, sir. Hi, Cabby! all ready! Back!"

The cab overtook Mr. Clinton walking back to Beechwood from Halidon. Mr. Consol took up the pedestrian, and announced the success of his mission to Merton Park. Arrived at Beechwood, Mr. Consol produced other blanks, and at Mr. Clinton's urgent solicitation accepted his cheque in settlement; and when the stock-jobber left the shade of the beeches the transfer was complete, excepting the exchange of certificates in London.

Left alone, Mr. Clinton took a pipe, and soliloquised in his native tongue as follows: "Most people would call this a shady investment. It is a clean loss to me as the case stands. I would not sell the stuff if I had an offer, unless Mr. Blauvelt or the Honorable should propose the purchase; and it is not probable that either of them will apply to me. The old gentleman said it was Baby's money. Maybe it is not a loss after all; I am going to own Baby or die! What use would money be to me if I failed to get Baby? And if I get her, this cheque is only a transfer in advance. She is a wonderful little woman: so shy and yet so frank. Cold as ice whenever I try to court her in my blundering fashion, yet warm as a sunbeam at other times. What a queer lot these women are! All except Mrs. Wailes; she has a way of finding out all a fellow thinks, and she has another way of saying all *she* thinks. How savagely she pitched into me the other night! She made a long speech that sounded like one of Melville's sermons. Baby is one of the good sort too. If she knew that I had been getting ready for her precious whelp of a cousin for two or three years, what would she think? That was a famous stab of Mrs. Wailes', when she showed up the meanness of fighting a fellow at disadvantage and calling it fair. It was like that infallible thrust of mine — one, two, *coupé*, and straight *carte* over the arm; never knew it to miss. And, by George! I was thinking of putting it to Mr. Rad in that way at the very time.

"Won't do! I shall not be cajoled or driven into an encounter with the rascal. Won't do it! I have felt so much happier in every way since I decided against it. After working up to the point through two or three years, making each step sure, and just ready to dress Mr. Rad, lo! he slips through my fingers like a greased eel. Somebody else must do his knitting for him — I'm out.

"Some day I'll tell Baby. Don't know how to tell her either. It

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will not be complimentary to say that Mrs. Wailes changed all my plans in half an hour, when Baby's gentle remonstrances against fighting made no impression. But they must have made a profound impression, and therefore the elder lady's arguments were only the clincher. How could I have ever gone for Baby with bloody hands!

"I think I will tell Wailes all about it. Something is the matter with the fellow, and he has pushed me away two or three times when I was getting confidential. Can't do anything while he is here. This is my house, and my guest is lord of it while he remains. He must choose the topics when we talk. By George! maybe he likes Baby! Of course; how could he help it! I'll find out this night or burst!"

CHAPTER LIII.

Resemblances.

When Doctor Maguire drove up to the entrance-hall at Merton Park, Jalap had just worked his ear under the headstall. The gallant steed presented a front that was reckless and knowing; a sort of "who cares" appearance that was defiant of proprieties. The doctor replaced the bridle and punched Jalap in the ribs. The latter took the punishment meekly, and consoled himself with oats after he was led away to the stables.

Dinner came and went. The party was inclined to be dull. The Squire had not told Rad of the stock transfer; in fact, the old gentleman was a little sore about the whole business, and looked with a discontented expression at his hopeful nephew, who sat by Sybil and seemed to be carrying on a quarrel in whispers. It was a good deal like a quarrel; Rad was saying rough things about Mr. Clinton, and Sybil was defending the absent like a good woman as she was. Rad had been accustomed to regard Sybil as his own property, secured by mortgage, and only needing the formality of foreclosure. But now, he began to have a dim apprehension that the title would be disputed. Miss Merton's eye was unusually erratic, and her discovery of resemblances more numerous than common. The doctor was polite and attentive, and after dinner claimed Miss Lucy for a partner at the whist-table. Radcliffe sat apart, reading a late number of "Bell's Life," and meditating an early retreat. There were some fellows in

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Gloucester who were going to have a night of gaming, and he had been invited to join them. He had declined the invitation in the morning, because the rule of the club to which they belonged was "Cash up," and his exchequer was low; but he had Consol's cheque in his pocket now, and felt very much inclined to drive up and take a hand.

A servant brought a note to Miss Merton, interrupting the game. She read it with an exclamation of surprise. "It is from Mrs. Wailes, Papa," she said, "and encloses some money to pay the rent of Rose Cottage to the end of the quarter; she has moved away."

"Moved away?" said the Squire.

"Yes; she has gone to Halidon for the present, she says. Is sorry she did not know that Mr. Radcliffe wanted the Cottage sooner, and sends her regards to you and her love to Sybil."

"Why, what the devil does this mean, Radcliffe?" said the Squire. "Have you been turning Mrs. Wailes out?"

"No, sir," answered Rad, stammering; "I told Trump to-day that I should want the Cottage, but I did not dream of such a prompt response. The fact is, Trump is so stuck-up since he got in with Grippe that one can't speak to him."

"Trump stuck-up! Humbug! Trump would not be stuck-up if he owned Halidon and the bank both. You must have been in no end of a rage to quarrel with Trump. Stuck-up! Rubbish! Cut, Doctor."

"What must I do with the money, Father?" said Lucy.

"Give it to Rad."

Radcliffe took the notes coolly and put them in his pocket. The amount was not large, only twenty pounds, but it would do to begin with; and those Gloucester fellows would not have to cash his cheque. Taking the opportunity when there was some debate at the card-table over a disputed trick, Mr. Radcliffe walked out, and finding Tim, was bowling along on the Gloucester road before he was missed.

Gone to Halidon! Then she would have to account for her sudden move, and the story would damage him there. The best way of egress from the dilemma was to stop at Halidon, ask for Mrs. Wailes, and make whatever atonement and explanation he could. It only required brass, and he had enough of that. Besides, he would probably get a glimpse of Mabel, and perhaps would find an opportunity to speak to her. He longed to hear the sound of her voice. The redeeming spot in this man's entire history was his deep and earnest admiration of Mabel, who had captivated him at first sight, impressed

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him with a profound sense of her goodness, and awed him by the stately dignity of her demeanor.

"I wish I were not such a scamp," he muttered, as the gates of Halidon came into sight; "if I had only been milksoppy like Trump, and had met this girl before she saw the infernal Yankee, I might have been far happier. I'll get another look at her anyhow. Tim, the gates are shut; jump down and ring."

When the Squire discovered Rad's departure, he began to reproach himself for unnecessary harshness. The whist-party was broken up by tacit agreement. Mr. Merton took Sybil upon his arm, and promenading the long hall, discussed all the matters now on the tapis: Mrs. Wailes, Radcliffe, Trump, and Clinton. The doctor, seated by Miss Merton on the old-fashioned sofa, seized the golden chance, and renewed his assault upon her virgin affections. He placed his elbow on the back of the sofa, and supporting his head with his hand, he gazed at Miss Lucy with an air of desolation that he had practised an hour at the glass.

"All these comforts surrounding you, Miss Lucy, have the tendency to harden your heart," he began.

"Dear me, Doctor! that is what Mr. Thorne said."

"The — mischief he did!" answered Maguire; "and I think it is a small business in Thorne to be appropriating my speeches."

"Oh! it was in his sermon last Sunday. He dined here afterwards, and hardened his heart by taking all the comfort he could get."

"But I meant to suggest that you become indifferent to the woes of others. Now, there's me for instance —"

"Doctor, would you mind it if I were to mention a resemblance —"

"Certainly not, Miss Lucy."

"Well, you look like Jalap when his ear is under the headstall. Your finger has bent your ear over; you know how cunning your horse looks when he gets that ear down."

"Upon my word, Miss Lucy!" said the doctor, "that is an original discovery. I have threatened to cut off that ear a dozen times, and now I'll do it."

"That would be cruel, Doctor," answered Miss Merton, "and I am sure you will not hurt Jalap; I have heard of your great kindness to the poor people of Merton."

"But they don't pin their ears down," said the Doctor, savagely, "and thus suggest those abominable resemblances to you. I wish you could discover a likeness in me to the man you would be willing to marry."

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"Doctor," said Miss Lucy, "you remind me of Sir Lucius O'Tralee."

"He must be a countryman of mine, anyway," answered the Doctor, moodily. "What ridiculous trick did he play?"

"Ridiculous! None, sir. He was a gallant gentleman, and he courted a lady I knew, so diligently that she married him at last."

"Be jabers! he's the boy for me! Do you mane that I may win your affections at last by persistent effort? Why, Miss Lucy, I'll make a fresh proposal to you every day for a year."

"Very well, Doctor. Lady O'Tralee told me that she married him at last to get rid of him."

"The divil! Excuse me, Miss Lucy, but this is the worst resemblance of all. If you are going to take me at the end of the year merely to get rid of me, you'll be badly done. Faix! I'll take you on my rounds in the gig."

"You will have to fix Jalap's ear—"

"Vesicating epispastic! I'll fix him!"

"I believe that is swearing, Doctor. Is it Latin or Irish?"

"It's half and half, Miss Lucy—half Latin and half Greek; and Greek is the same as Irish, you know: it only manes that I'll blister the rashkill. Am I to understand that you favor my proposal?"

"Well, Doctor," answered the lady, "you are so impetuous. You propose to court for a whole year—"

"Divil a bit! I said every day for a year—I mane every day in the present year, and that will make a hundred proposals."

"Suppose I agree to entertain no other proposals, Doctor," said Miss Merton, "and to give due consideration to yours? Since old Mrs. Grumpy told me how tenderly you ministered to her, I've felt very kindly towards you; you must have a good heart."

"It's just a blazing coal of fire, Miss Lucy! I can't say much about the goodness, but the extent of its devotion to you can niver be told. Faix! if I could cut a hole in my ribs and let you see how it bates, you would take me off-hand."

"And then I should be discovering all kinds of resemblances, Doctor, and you have no patience—"

"Pashints! I've got forty on my list, and thirty-five of them pay nothing. Botheration! Miss Lucy, you may discover a likeness to the ould fellow himself if you plaze, as soon as you promise to become Mrs. Maguire."

"Here comes Papa; I'll ask his opinion about the matter, Doctor. You have proposed several times, but you never would wait for an answer; I am sure I never rejected you."

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"Rejected me!" said the Doctor. "The last time I proposed do you know what you said?"

"No; I don't remember."

"Well, you said I resembled ould Podd. If you will indicate what encouragement there was in that I'll be obliged."

"I am sure, Doctor," replied Miss Merton, with her eye in the corner, "I cannot help the resemblances. When you remind me of other people and things I should be very deceitful if I did not say so."

"Thrue for you, Miss Lucy—"

"Now there's Radcliffe. I happened to say last night that he was like the giraffe I saw at Regent's Park—he was craning his neck up, trying to look over the blind—and he was quite nettled."

"He's a simpleton," answered the Doctor, promptly.

"Of course. Now, there was the hippopotamus; he kept moving about in the tank, with his nose up, and swimming over to the side where the children were throwing bits of cake—"

"What is that about the hippopotamus, Lucy?" said the Squire, approaching. "You mean at the Zoo? Are you telling the Doctor what you said about his resemblance? Ho! ho!"

"Yes, Papa; there is no objection, I'm sure. Well, Doctor, I only said that the hippopotamus was so amiable and patient when the bad children threw him pebbles and sticks instead of cakes, that—that he reminded me of you when the little rascals at Merton rang your office-bell that night. You remember you said that they would have measles or something before they died, and you would administer their medicine?"

"Yes," grunted the Doctor.

"Well, I caught the eye of the hippopotamus, and it said just as plainly as possible: 'Some fine day one of you young vagabonds will tumble into my tank, and if I don't make mincemeat of you my name's not—'"

"'Maguire!'" shouted the Squire—"that's what she said, Doctor; and by Jupiter! the fellow's eye did twinkle so significantly that I've no doubt Lucy hit his thought precisely. We had been talking about the satisfaction you could take out of the boys when you physicked 'em; and we concluded that Lucy had made her point. Ho! ho! ho!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" responded the doctor. "And now, I must be off. Sorry to tear meself away, but I must see the village people to-night. Miss Lucy, we'll have another lot of likenesses when the Squire invites me to dinner again."

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The doctor meditated as he drove homeward under the stars.

"Ould Podd, Jalap, and a hippopotamus—a baste that looks for all the worrild like an overgrown pig under the influence of a strong narcotic. Be jabers! she has nothing left now, barrin' the divil."

CHAPTER LIV.

STILL ANOTHER.

The reception Mrs. Wailes met as she descended from the carriage at Halidon was flattering. Mr. Grippe, bareheaded, stood out on the gravel, and with courtly politeness assisted her as she alighted. On either side of him stood a fairy, each lovelier by reason of the contrast with the other, and each beaming with smiles that were full of sweetness and indicative of hearty welcome. Mr. Grippe resigned her to the fairies, who escorted her up the stone steps, while he hobbled after. They led her into the great drawing-room, blazing with lights, and placing her in the arm-chair, which was Mr. Grippe's throne, divested her of bonnet and wraps. The excellent lady, usually composed and self-possessed, was slightly excited by her novel surroundings, as she had not had the opportunity for a little quiet meditation since the receipt of Mr. Grippe's invitation; and her dialogue with her son, just concluded, added to her excitement; while the sight of Mabel, bright and blooming, suggested the possibility of the existence of Another. There was in her mind also a vague sense of the obligation resting upon her to administer twenty-five grains of strychnia to Another, should he appear.

Mabel's bloom was deepened a little because she saw no Prince Prettyman, and she was dying to know why he had not appeared. Mr. Grippe, who was always prompt about things, was trotting about, under excitement also, and she could not suggest to him the propriety of asking Mrs. Wailes to explain the Prince's absence. She would have to wait until it came out naturally.

Heloïse was French, and simply charming; nothing had occurred to make her claws protrude, and she was velvety. Mabel looked at her and listened to her voluble welcomes with great admiration.

"Ah, Madame has come to create terrible strife," she said; "Mabel and I have agreed to scratch each other, *a l'outrance*, for her favor. But not to-night; we postpone the combat until Madame is rested."

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"But you must talk to me in English, Mademoiselle," said Mrs. Wailes. "Do you not remember that we agreed to banish French?"

"Oh yaas. That will also be polite for me, because Madame will talk mosh, and I very leetle."

"And when you and Miss Grahame begin your combat, I would suggest that you scold each other in English—"

"Ah, then I am conquered; Mabel scold perfectly in three—four language, and I know not the English scold-words."

Mr. Grippe was eager to get off his formal welcome. He fidgeted around the trio, while they laughed at this last sally, and when they regained their composure, he found his opportunity.

"I am truly happy, Mrs. Wailes," he said, "to welcome you back to your ancient home; and I shall feel the more honored the more you assert your rightful authority. You will believe my assurance that all I wrote you is true, and we'll wait a day or two for full explanation and proof, at present necessarily delayed. Your son is not with you."

"He sends his excuses, Mr. Grippe. He had promised to spend some days at Beechwood, and Mr. Clinton expected him to-night. I cannot answer your welcome properly, as the whole proceeding is beyond my powers of comprehension; but I have no difficulty in accepting your hospitality for a few days, which I do very gratefully. These dear girls will bring back my lost youth while we explore old Halidon together."

No Prince, pretty Mabel! Heloïse did not care about the Prince; her jest about the combat for Mrs. Wailes' favor was partly true, however. On the day of the dinner, when Mrs. Wailes sat with Mabel instead of cultivating Heloïse, the latter was jealous. Certain attentions were due to "my adopted daughter" from all the visitors at Halidon; so Heloïse, with a little spice of malice, had said to Mabel, "Do not dislocate your ankle again, ma belle, and thus monopolise Madame!" And Mabel winced, feeling guilty. Heloïse was also jealous because Mr. Clinton had been more impressive and apparently confidential with Mabel that day. There were smouldering fires ready to flame out upon provocation.

Mrs. Wailes was wise and considerate. She was strongly attracted to the English girl, while she felt only a polite interest in the other; therefore she was diligent in her attentions to Heloïse, giving Mabel's little hand a gentle pressure slyly when occasion served. Tea was served in the library. They all went out upon the South Terrace afterwards, and while they sat there Mr. Radcliffe Merton arrived,

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and alighting from his vehicle, joined them, fully equipped with modest assurance.

He shook hands with Mr. Grippe, bowed to the young ladies, and taking a vacant chair near Mrs. Wailes, addressed her with tears in his accents.

"I am deeply wounded, Mrs. Wailes," said he, "to find you here. A few petulant words to Trump have wrought great mischief; after all these years of friendship, it seems to me that I should have endured more from him with better temper."

"Trump is usually patient and forbearing," answered Mrs. Wailes, "and he has said nothing to me that indicated resentment—"

"So much the worse, ma'am," said Radcliffe. "If he had been in a real good rage, I shouldn't wonder at this move. Is he here?"

"No."

"That is unlucky," said Radcliffe, secretly rejoicing that Trump was not basking in the light of the violet eyes; "but I'll see him to-morrow and make no end of apologies. I don't know what to say to you, ma'am, except that I am heartily sorry and mortified."

"Pray, say nothing then," responded Mrs. Wailes. "No harm has been done. Trump only told me that you wanted the Cottage as soon as possible, and we vacated it at once. I should have done the same, however, if you had not wanted possession."

"You were going away, anyhow?" said Radcliffe, surprised.

"Yes."

"Well, that is a relief. It was only last week that you spoke of plans for the winter—"

"But circumstances have occurred since then to change my plans—nothing connected with your disagreement with Trump. How bright the stars are!"

"Beautiful!" answered Radcliffe, rising. "I am going to Gloucester. Miss Grahame, I am recently from Blackfriars; may I say a word to you in private?"

While Mabel, stricken speechless by this proposal, sat silent, Mrs. Wailes took the arm of Heloïse and stepped out upon the lawn. Mr. Grippe had gone into the library, and they were alone upon the terrace. Radcliffe had made the request with no definite plan of attack, and was trying to call up some plausible story, when Mabel stood suddenly before him.

"Blackfriars, sir!" she said. "Is my father ill?"

"Oh no; forgive me if I have alarmed you. I—I did not see Mr. Grahame, though I called twice. Once he was out, the second

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time he declined seeing me; and as my business was of great importance to me — I desired to ask *you* for the explanation of his denial."

"I cannot enlighten you, sir," answered Mabel, coldly.

"Will you please resume your seat and hear what I have to say —"

"In the library, if you please," said Mabel, moving towards the door; "there is nothing you can have to say that Mr. Grippe may not hear."

"Pardon me again," said Radcliffe, stepping between her and the door; "I will detain you but a moment. I called on Mr. Grahame to obtain his consent before I addressed you. My life depends upon the success of my suit. I ask you to look upon me as a suitor for your hand. I have never — nay," and he caught her hand as she brushed by him, "you must hear me out. I love you so madly that I am not accountable for any violation of proprieties! I swear to you that I will leave no means untried — I will kill any man who stands between you and me! And I will destroy myself when I relinquish the hope of possessing you!"

He held her hand in a vise. She did not struggle, but her face, dimly visible in the starlight, was ablaze with resentment.

"Release my hand, if you please," she said.

"Not until you answer me! Do you want me to swear more solemnly? Do you think I am not in earnest?"

"I think you have dined recently. James, take this person away! he is drunk." The air of infinite scorn and disgust with which she spoke would have annihilated a sensitive suitor.

James had appeared unexpectedly, coming round the corner of the house, and promptly drew near the excited couple. Radcliffe dropped the imprisoned hand, and without a word moved out upon the grass. Mabel opened the library-door, rubbing her hand vigorously with her handkerchief, and seeing Mr. Grippe nodding over his newspaper, passed him, gained the staircase, went to her own room, and after an elaborate ablution, sat down and indulged in a good cry.

Rage, pure and simple, drew forth the tears. The insolence of this assault, so outraging all decency! And no one near to defend her! She felt so unprotected and desolate. She would go back to Blackfriars at once; her father would shield her. Ah, when the brute called on him, he denied himself. Oh, noble father! And she cried a little more, thinking of him, and longing to lay her head on his breast.

An arm slipped around her waist, and her wet hands pulled gently away from her face — Mrs. Wailes kneeling by her chair.

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"What troubles you, my dear?" said the gentlest voice in England.

More tears now — a flood of them. She had found a resting-place almost as good as the Reverend Edward's sturdy breast. When she got her voice back, she tried to tell her distress.

"The hideous brute! he seized my hand, ma'am, and held me while he talked. He said he loved me, the wretch! How dare he insult an English gentlewoman! No amount of drunkenness will excuse him."

"Of whom are you speaking, Mabel?"

"Of that cat-eyed, ugly wretch, Radcliffe Merton — so hateful to me that the mere sight of his name on a letter drove me from your house! There, it is out! Yes, Mrs. Wailes, on the morning after my accident your maid brought a letter addressed to this man, and I, never having seen him, concluded that your son was he, and that you were his wretched mother; and the one horrible fact pressing upon me constantly is that his mother murdered mine!"

"What dreadful words! Poor child, you do not know what you are saying."

"Do I not?" answered Mabel. "Listen. This man's father killed my uncle. There was no proof, but my father says it is certainly true. He drove his wife mad — I mean my uncle's wife. My mother, who was in feeble health, died when I was born, and my father says the shock killed her. Surely you ought to know the story —"

"What was your mother's name, Mabel?" said Mrs. Wailes, a light breaking upon her mind.

"Daisy Lennox."

"My darling! my dear girl! how could I be so blind! Your mother was my dearest friend. I will tell you to-morrow how I sought for her and Dora; but you mentioned your uncle — do you mean Dora's husband?"

"Yes, ma'am; Harold Trumpley of Halidon."

Mrs. Wailes started to her feet. More light still; she was dazzled and confounded; and while she still strove to reconcile the conflicting accounts she had received from Baden after her brother's death, and the vague rumors of his wife's death at Châlons, Mabel continued her story.

"There was something about Captain Merton's courtship of my Aunt Dora. I don't know the particulars; but she rejected him and married Mr. Trumpley. There was also some story of previous quarrels between them. Father says they were both jealous and exacting; but they were married, and went to Baden with my parents. Captain Merton and Miss Radcliffe were there, and by some means

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they managed to sow discord between husband and wife. Aunt Dora left Baden, and her husband was found dead the next day. We have the letters — or at least De Witt has them —"

"De Witt!" said Mrs. Wailes, horrified.

"Yes, ma'am; Mr. Clinton — my cousin. He is the son of my mother's sister Mabel."

"Cousin!" said Mrs. Wailes. "My child, perhaps your hatred of Radcliffe is measured by your affection for your cousin. Tell me, if you have more than cousinly affection for him?"

"Dear Mrs. Wailes," said Mabel, laughing gleefully, "don't you know? Alas! I think De Witt loves Another."

CHAPTER LV.

Loss and Gain.

While Mr. Radcliffe Merton was delivering his impassioned address on the South Terrace, the sharp eyes of Heloïse were taking in all the gestures; and though she gave courteous attention to Mrs. Wailes, she was snapping her white teeth with a click, and mourning that she did not have Mabel's disengaged fingers between them. The light of the stars was not sufficient to show Mabel's look of horror and repugnance at the discreet distance of twenty yards, though Mr. Merton could see it very distinctly. It was all over in a minute or two, and when Mabel whisked through the door into the library, the young gentleman stepped down from the terrace and approached the two ladies.

"It was horridly rude of me," he said, "to invite you to retire; but I had a word to say to Miss Grahame that I was not at liberty to say in public. Allow me to escort you back to the terrace."

"Do you not feel cool?" said Mrs. Wailes to Heloïse, when they resumed their seats.

"Oh no, Madam; the air is charming."

"Well, I do. If you will excuse me, I will get a shawl."

"Allow me, Madam —"

"By no means. I will return presently; but I think you had better come indoors."

"If Monsieur is cold —" said Heloïse.

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"On the contrary," answered Radcliffe, "I am stifling." This was a slight exaggeration, but his cheeks felt comfortably warm. He had a vague impression that his ears had been boxed soundly by the little hand he had rudely seized a moment before.

Mr. Grippe was still somnolent as Mrs. Wailes crossed the room. She found her shawl, and hearing the young people in animated conversation on the terrace, she ascended the staircase in search of Mabel. Her door was ajar, and she saw her sitting in the corner, her face covered with her hands. Without hesitation, Mrs. Wailes entered her chamber, and kneeling by the sobbing girl, took her in her arms.

"Monsieur speaks French?" said Heloïse, when Mrs. Wailes left them.

"No — that is, not well enough to converse; but you speak English charmingly."

"I have taken some lesson," answered Heloïse. "I have a letter in English which I obtained at the Madeleine; some gallant gentleman have write the letter to instruct me and to amuse himself." She took a letter from her pocket as she spoke. "See, it is here. It say many pretty English words. I have learned them all. But hélas! the pretty words are all lies," and she tore the letter up in minute fragments and scattered them upon the terrace.

"This is a devil of a mess!" muttered Radcliffe; "and I'll be hanged if I can see my way out of it."

"It is the English style, is it not?" continued Heloïse. "I am desolated to think Monsieur had such trouble. He have to make lies for Mees Sybil also, and for Mabel."

"If you will listen to me," said Radcliffe, "I will explain."

"Listen?" said Heloïse. "It does not need. Monsieur can write one letter again. He can make new lies, and say there is no Mees Sybil and no Mabel."

"I assure you," said Radcliffe, "that you do me injustice. You gave me no encouragement. When I came here to dinner and saw you —"

"And Mabel — it was to Mabel you look. You address to me not the word; and when Mabel was retired, you no longer could remain."

"I had to go to London and to Paris —"

"Ah then! you have to make more letters for the Madeleine, is it not?"

"You will not hear me!" said Radcliffe, rising. "I will leave you now and hope to satisfy you hereafter. You have destroyed my

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letter, and you drive me away. When your anger is over, I will come again. Ready, Tim! Au revoir, Mademoiselle!"

James, who had been lingering within call since Mabel had departed, opened the gates to give the dog-cart egress. Looking with stolid composure after the retreating vehicle until it was lost in the darkness, he reëntered and locked the lodge-gates. "That Merton is a bad lot!" he said, shaking his head solemnly. "Miss Gram was mistaken. It was not drunk — it was devil; and if it came in the way of duty, I'd like to punch 'is 'ead."

Mr. Merton meantime pursued his way to Gloucester. The Festive Club was his objective point. It was quite nine o'clock when he arrived, and the members were busy at their usual vocation — passing money from one to another upon the cast of a die or the turn of a card. There were no "debts of honor" due to or by the members of the "Festive," as their cardinal law forbade all gambling upon honor; "money up" was the invariable rule.

Radcliffe found a place at the roulette-table, and in the course of an hour or two had parted with all his loose money. He had Mr. Consol's cheque, however, and the obliging treasurer of the club cashed it for him; and just as Munseer Blowell was delivering his peroration at Merton Village, Mr. Radcliffe Merton resumed his seat at roulette.

Wine in abundance. Radcliffe liked wine, especially Burgundy; but he imbibed sparingly, though frequently, and lost a good number of twenty-pound notes. Convinced at last that he was "out of luck," he suddenly left the table, the larger part of his money gone.

"Curse that Dorado!" he said. "It has brought me into trouble all the time; and after getting out of it so nicely, I have squandered the most of the proceeds here. By all the gods! I'll put what's left of it upon the next roll, and then quit either way."

He counted out the remainder of his money, and putting on his hat and overcoat, laid the banknotes on the table. The ball spun round a short minute and fell into the wrong compartment — Dorado was all gone.

Tim was waiting at the door for him. Some unusual touch of human emotion flashed upon Merton's mind as he thought of Tim's long vigil out in the cold. He went back, and tossing off a bumper of Burgundy, refilled the glass and took it out to his groom. "Here, Tim, you have had a long watch; this will warm your blood. Drink."

"What is it, Mr. Radcliffe?" said Tim, doubtfully.

"Red Burgundy, you rascal! Not quite equal to old Grippe's; but 'twill do. Down with it!"

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While the strange liquid trickled down Tim's throat, his master climbed up to his perch. Taking the empty goblet from his servant's hand, he tossed it carelessly into the street. "That will spoil the set," he muttered. "The 'Festive' will have a memorandum against me. G'long, Maggie!"

As he turned out of the high-street and took the Merton road, the town-clock struck five; the dawn was at hand.

Before he reached Beechwood he saw a man running at full speed, meeting him. The light was not strong enough to distinguish what he was like. "Hillo, friend!" said Radcliffe, as the figure flitted by; "is the devil after you?"

The fugitive made no reply, and as Merton pulled up his horses as if to stop, he scrambled through the hedge and disappeared.

"He has been at some villainy," said Merton; "but it is no business of ours. I hope he has been murdering that cursed Yankee!"

Past Beechwood and approaching Halidon. Another pedestrian, but walking soberly and with stately grace. The dawn was here.

"Miss Gram!" said Tim.

"What!" answered Radcliffe, checking his team.

"Miss Gram! No sich walk in Hingland!"

Radliffe passed the reins to Tim, and stood in the road suddenly, confronting the lady. "By all the gods," he said as she stopped, "my luck has changed! Allow me to offer Miss Grahame a seat. Tim, turn the horses!"

Mabel passed him silently, but he caught her arm and drew her back. "Come," said he, with a brutal laugh, "your game is up! I am going to give you a drive," and he passed his arm around her waist. "Where are you going? To visit the Yankee? Rather early, I should think."

"How dare you, sir!" said Mabel, as she struggled to get free. "Release me and begone!"

"Begone! Certainly; but I shall take you with me. Tim, give me a lift!"

"Help!" screamed Mabel.

"Bah!" said Merton, catching her mantle from her shoulders and throwing it over her head. Drawing the folds tightly over her face, he raised her bodily and carried her to the roadside. She struggled violently, and tried to tear the mantle from her face. In vain. With Tim's aid he placed her in the bottom of the dog-cart, and kneeling by her side, held her down with the grasp of a giant.

"Listen!" said Merton, carefully uncovering a little pink shell of

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an ear, while he held the cloak tightly to her face — "Listen! Do you suppose I am going to rest under your scorn and hatred? Never! I shall take you where no eye but mine will see you, and keep you until you learn to look upon me with favor. You silly girl! you do not know what a devil you defy. If my infatuation were less, I might consider all the risks I incur in abducting a lady from the high-road and carrying her off to my den. But I heed no consequences! I would not release you now if I knew that death was the consequence of detaining you! I am glad to see that you have enough sense to cease your useless struggle. The sooner that you know you are entirely in my power, and entirely helpless, the better. Tim, drive to the Cottage!"

"Better not go down this road," said Tim, with drunken gravity. The Burgundy had fallen on top of six mugs of ale, which Tim had taken at regular intervals while waiting at the door of the club; and "harmless" as either was alone, the joint forces of ale and wine had been too much for Tim.

"Why not?"

"'Cause we shall meet Merton people coming to Glo'ster, and shall pass two or three lodges, and day is coming."

"How shall we go then?" said Merton, irresolutely.

"There is a lane back yonder that comes out by the mill. It is longer, but is apt to be quiet."

"Go on then. Keep the rein tight on Maggie, and she will move faster. By all the gods! I believe the girl is smothered; she has not moved since we put her in. Drive on; I will uncover her face when we reach the lane."

And when they passed under the trees in the narrow lane, he cautiously removed the cloak from the pale face. A flush crept over it, her eyes opened, and starting up with unexpected vigor as she caught sight of Beechwood and the two gables, she cried stentoriously, "Help! help! Mr. Wailes! Mr. Clinton! Help! help!"

CHAPTER LVI.

The Ghost Reappears.

"My dear Wailes," said Clinton, swinging the gate open, "welcome! I am ashamed of my thoughtlessness. And you have carried

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your portmanteau all the way from Rose Cottage! I could have sent Memnon, if I had not been so hopelessly thick-skulled."

"Pooh!" answered Trumpley, "it is only half a mile. I rode as far as Halidon."

"Indeed! Here, Memnon, take it to Mr. Wailes' room. You have dined, of course?"

"Yes," answered Wailes; "but you will have to give me some food before bed-time. My dinner was light, and eaten very hurriedly."

"That's jolly!" exclaimed Clinton, producing his whistle and sounding two notes. "Ah, here's Phillis. Phillis, my friend Mr. Wailes will be hungry anon. I give you no orders; I merely announce the fact."

"Werry well, Mars Clint. What time anon come?"

"Mr. Wailes, will you please answer the question?" said Clinton.

"Nay, the case is not urgent," answered Wailes; "you have your regular hours, of course. Whenever you call, I shall be ready."

"Mars Clint don't have no reg'lar hours for nuffin," said Phillis, discontentedly. "Him go to sleep in day-time, and walk about all night. Him eat dinner when mos' people done gone to bed one time, and don't eat none next day. Nebber mind — him git married some day; den we'll see about de hours! I'll have supper ready at ten o'clock, sar," and Phillis departed.

"That remark about marriage," said Clinton, as they entered the hall, "was partly prophetic and partly threatening. Wailes, my dear friend, if I ever get a wife, I shall have to thank you for rescuing her from great peril."

"I do not understand you," said Wailes, stammering.

"Do you not? Well, I have selected my future partner, and she is a lady who owes her life —"

"Pooh!" said Wailes, "don't talk rubbish. Where are we going?"

"Up to my den first," said Clinton; "the pipes are there. We will smoke a little, and I will tell you a story."

"About your ghost?"

"Yes; it is time you should know. The tobacco is in that cannister; here are the pipes. What are you looking at so intently? The swords? Do you recognise them?"

"They certainly look like the Göttingen small-swords," said Wailes, taking the weapons down from the wall; "are they really the same?"

"Yes. When I got over my — little accident, I prevailed on the master of arms to give them to me for a new pair. I thought I

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would renew the trial with Mr. Merton some day, and I had a fancy for the same weapons. Don't look so grave," he continued, laughing; "I have given up that intention. Your mother assaulted me one night, and — and — exorcised me; I had been possessed for years. I cannot tell you all she said, but the sum of it was, that I — conscious of superior skill — meditated cold-blooded murder under the guise of a fair encounter. It was every word true, Wailes. Lay down your pipe and let me show you something."

He took down a pair of foils as he spoke, and chalked the buttons.

"Now stand here," he said, giving a foil to Wailes. "You are wonderfully expert with the weapon, but you are no match for me. Button your coat, please — so! Now I will put four chalk-marks on your right breast in four passes, all within two inches of the second button. *En garde!*"

There was a rasping of steel against steel, a rapid interchange of thrusts, lasting two or three minutes only, and Clinton lowered his point.

"It is done," he said; "examine your coat. Did you feel any of the thrusts?"

"No," answered Wailes, in astonishment; "but here are the spots, beyond doubt."

Clinton returned the foils to their hook on the wall, brushed off the chalk-marks from his friend's coat, and coolly lighted his pipe. They drew up their chairs to the hearth, where a wood-fire was burning.

"Now, my friend," said Clinton, "you will begin to understand. I spent a year in incessant practice, with the best teachers I could find. I had one in Paris, and stuck to him until I mastered him. Then I went to Vienna and found another, and finally went to Naples, where I learned my best tricks. My instructor there invested his art with a certain glamour that charmed me; I stayed with him until he told me he could teach me no more.

"In all this time, and indeed until a few nights ago, I had one set purpose; it was to make the same kind of a hole in Rad Merton's body as the one he made in mine. I could afford to wait, I could select my own time; but all other plans were subordinate to this one. I really believe the devil had entire control of me during those years.

"You see how shabby the whole business is! I cannot tell you how heartily I blush when I think of it. It is like Rad's own tricks; it is about equal to playing cards with an ignorant booby, when you can read the backs. Pah! how could I be so base a whelp as to

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entertain the purpose? And how can I be grateful enough for the deliverance wrought by your good mother's agency?

"And — greatest marvel of all — I expected to go to this gentle girl, and ask her to take my bloody hand. Think of it, Wailes!"

"What did Mother say?" asked Trumpley.

"Rather what did she not say," answered Clinton. "I knew of course that the whole story was new to her. I told her that night after Mr. Grippe's dinner; and yet the lecture she gave me sounded like a moral essay read out of a book. She is a wonderful woman — wonderful!"

Wailes had a sly suspicion that Mrs. Wailes had quoted from the Meditations; he knew her tricks. But he was loyal and silent. While they sat and smoked, he recalled certain passages in the same fountain of wisdom.

"Obligations," quoth he, or rather quoted he, "must be founded upon relations. You can see that a man is bound to do certain things as a member of society, which he would not be bound to do if he were alone in the world. There are duties belonging to the subject of a state, differing from the duties demanded from the member of a household. I have always been taught that there is a law of brotherhood perpetually pressing upon the sons of men. It forbids selfishness; it banishes vengeance; it inculcates beneficence. The formulation of this law is found in the Decalogue; in the Gospel it is summarily stated in the axiom, 'No man liveth unto himself; no man dieth unto himself.' But his life and death have a far-reaching effect upon the whole course of human history."

"Go on, my dear fellow," said Clinton; "it sounds like a page from Paley."

"Paley be blowed!" answered Wailes, irreverently; "he did not begin to apprehend the law. There is more of pure ethics in a page of Sir William Hamilton than in the whole of Paley's writings."

"It is all very fine," said Clinton after a pause; "but the whole of human history just contradicts your axioms."

"Of course. Humanity is in an abnormal condition. Logic as really demands regeneration as revelation does."

"I hear the clatter of dishes," said Clinton — "prepare. Do you know what Phillis will give you?"

"No."

"Well, I will tell you; Pongoteague oysters. A barrel arrived to-day: fifteen days from Baltimore, and packed in ice. My friend, if you have never had Pongoteague oysters, you will have a new sen-

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sation. Let us go to the dining-room; Phillis will summon us to her feast in five minutes."

The sonorous announcement of midnight by the old clock in the hall startled the young gentlemen as they sat in the drawing-room after supper. Wailes prepared to retire, Clinton lighting his candle. As they were shaking hands, the door leading to the main hall opened, and with noiseless tread a lady entered the room. Her beautiful hair, white as snow, was arranged in broad folds upon her head. There was a longing expression in her eyes, as she advanced to Clinton, holding out her hands. "I want Daisy," she said, softly. "Did you not tell me I should see Daisy?"

Clinton sprang to her side, took her hand, and led her to the sofa. "Dear Aunt Dora," said he, "you will wait a little, will you not?"

"I cannot wait! I want Daisy," she answered, plaintively. "Send him for her," and she pointed her slender finger at Wailes.

"This is my friend Mr. Wailes," said Clinton.

"Yes — Trumpley Wailes. He told me. Ah! young gentleman, you are ill-named."

"Do not say so, Madam," replied Trumpley; "my mother was Edith Trumpley, and my name came from her."

"Edith!" she answered, dreamily. "Edith! Certainly; bring her also, De Witt."

"I will, Aunt Dora, at daylight. Will you wait until daylight? It will only be a few hours. Let me take you to your room."

She took his arm, nodding her head to Wailes as she went from the room. While Wailes was debating the question whether he should retire or not, Clinton returned.

"You may as well extinguish your bed-candle," said Clinton; "after seeing so much, you will not sleep until you know more. Do you know her?"

"You called her 'Aunt Dora,'" said Wailes; "she must be Dora Lennox. She is also Mrs. Hamet."

"And the widow of Harold Trumpley," said Clinton. "I will despatch a message to Doctor Maguire; the crisis of her disease is at hand. Memnon!"

The sable Greek appeared.

"Saddle Phaginny. I will write a note to Doctor Maguire; you must go to Merton and find him. Don't return without him."

"All right, Mars Clint," and Memnon vanished.

"Excuse me one moment, Wailes; I must send for Mabel too. She can come at daylight; and we will go for Mrs. Wailes a little

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later." He opened an escritoire and wrote two notes. In five minutes the tramp of Phaginny's hoofs was heard on the gravel. Clinton went through the conservatory and out at the secret door.

"When you get the Doctor started, Memnon," he said, "ride with him as far as Halidon; and get in there, and see that Miss Mabel Grahame gets this note at once. Away with you!"

"And now, Wailes," he said, as he returned, "come up to the den and hear a long story. No sleep for you to-night, my boy."

CHAPTER LVII.

Approaching a Crisis.

Mr. Clinton deliberately divested himself of coat and waistcoat, and donned his dressing-gown. He exchanged his boots for moccasins, and recommended similar changes to his guest. Wailes was provided with gown and slippers; and with a log or two added to the fire, some bottles of bitter beer on the table, and the inevitable pipes, the two young gentlemen prepared to "make a night of it." Clinton closed the inside shutters, wheeled his great chair to one side of the hearth and the sofa to the other, and stretching himself out upon the latter, began his story.

"Aunt Dora will sleep now until five o'clock," he said; "she is very regular in her habits. I can talk with perfect freedom to you now, and indeed I brought you to Beechwood for that purpose; but I had arranged to have your mother also, and Mabel, to-morrow, and to tell you all together."

Wailes winced slightly at the mention of Mabel.

"You know Mabel?" continued Clinton; "that is, you saw her at Mr. Grippe's dinner. Had you seen her before?"

"Yes, certainly," replied Wailes, thinking this was a strange question to come from the man who had so recently thanked him for saving her life. The next sentence or two bewildered him still more.

"Captain Lennox had three daughters. The eldest, Mabel, was my mother; the second, Dora, you saw to-night. She is the widow of your uncle, Harold Trumpley of Halidon. This much I know positively, but there are mysteries about her marriage and her reported death that I cannot unravel. You will aid me anon. The third daughter, Daisy, was the mother of Mabel Grahame."

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Wailes started to his feet, threw his pipe in the fire, walked round to the head of the sofa, shook Clinton's hand violently, and then resumed his seat. "Go on, you jolly old long-legged brick, go on!"

"Ah!" said Clinton, somewhat surprised at this demonstration, "that is your British fashion of recognising the family connection. Well, your uncle married my aunt, so we are almost kin. Better get another pipe."

Trump meekly selected a new pipe from the box, filled and lighted it, taking a sip of beer first.

"There is no such thing as Another," observed Trump.

"Another! There are forty at least," answered Clinton, "in the same box."

"Certainly. Excuse me," said Wailes; "I was thinking of something else. Proceed."

"You have disturbed the flow of my ideas with your confounded Another," said Clinton. "Well, I found all this out in America. The letters came to me at my Uncle Clinton's death, and — you shall see them — after reading them over a hundred times, until I had all the actors distinctly formed in my mind, I decided to come over here and hunt for kindred."

"Count me in, my dear Clinton. You shall call mother Aunt Edith."

"Thanks. That will be Another."

"Never mind," replied Trump, confused, "but go on."

"Well, I went to Baden first. Several of the letters are dated Maison Rouge, near Baden. I spent a month there. I went to Maison Rouge. It is an old tumble-down ruin, no tokens of life about its mouldering walls. Of all the places I ever saw it seemed the most dismal, except L'Abîme Noir."

"The Black Abyss! Do you mean the Pit of Darkness?"

"Pretty nearly. It is a chasm near Baden; a rift in the rocks on a sterile hill, surrounded by gloomy trees. The people who live there, ignorant and superstitious, have a hundred legends, all horrible. I found one old man living in a hut at the base of this hill, a maker of wooden clocks, who told me a coherent story of an English lord who had been murdered there the quarter of a century ago. I bought two clocks from him, and he told me the names of victim and murderer. The victim was Harold Trumpley; the assassin was Captain Merton. This corresponded with my old letters, as you will see. I went thence to Châlons, and after a week of patient toil I found La Sœur Clementine, who had seen the last of Aunt Dora. She had

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no doubt about her death; but by persistent inquiry I found that her evidence was all circumstantial, and being hungry for kindred, I rejected her story. Then I came to England. Beechwood first, of course. By-the-bye, Beechwood is my property; it comes to me as the sole heir of Mabel Lennox. I can prove my right without difficulty. But your beautiful English jurisprudence has covered Beechwood with so enormous a debt, that it is more profitable to deny ownership and pay the chancery rental.

"I found Aunt Dora first. Your mother helped me. Do you remember what she said that night we watched here together? The next night I watched alone, and found her in the conservatory. She has been somnambulic for years. I wakened her, and revealed myself. She was greatly shocked, and has been more or less demented ever since. Maguire promises her complete restoration, however. To-morrow I shall introduce Mabel and your mother, and the Doctor is very sanguine.

"Then I found dear Mabel. I did not know she was so near until the day of Mr. Grippe's dinner. I found an opportunity to say a word or two just before you started off so suddenly. By-the-bye, again it is curious, but she told me she had injured you in some way, mixing you up with Rad Merton, and — hey! — what is the matter now?"

Trump had risen again, throwing another pipe on the hearth, danced a most absurd *pas seul*, kicked a chair over, set it up again, and then resumed his seat. "Oh, what a blockhead! Mother was right. Go on, please, I am all attention. One more mouthful of beer."

"It's my opinion," said Clinton, "that you have had beer enough to-night. Help yourself, however, and welcome."

"It isn't the beer, Clinton," said Wailes. "I have been carrying a great load upon my mind, and am just getting relief. It is the reaction."

"My dear fellow, go to bed," said Clinton. "I am ashamed of myself for keeping you up so late, listening to my dull stories."

"If you say bed to me again I'll throw this beer-bottle at you! Go on."

"Decidedly inebriated!" ejaculated Clinton. "Wailes, your head is not worth shucks."

"What are shucks?"

"Shucks are the covering that nature provides for maize while it is growing. When it matures, the shucks are taken off and thrown

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away. I believe some Yankee has utilised them as a substitute for hair in mattresses."

"Thank you; the explanation is lucid. Pray go on."

"There is not much more to tell; I will give you the letters. Will you read them to-night, or wait?"

"To-night, by all means."

Clinton unlocked a cabinet and took out a bundle of letters, which he gave to his friend.

"There are no secrets in them which you may not know. I have told your mother of their contents, excepting so far as they related to her brother and Aunt Dora. Somehow I have shrunk from all reference to her, waiting until I can learn all the truth. I asked Aunt Dora once, but she repelled me so vehemently that I have not dared to renew the investigation in that direction. I did not tell Mrs. Wailes who Mabel was either, because—"

"Because?" said Trump.

"Because we were discoursing about Another," answered Clinton. "The truth is, Wailes," he continued, with averted face, "I am spoony, and Sybil was the topic last night. By-the-bye, she never tires of talking about Trumpley Wailes. Maybe you are spoony too?"

"Mr. Clinton," said Trump, with stoical indifference, "calm your apprehensions. I am in pursuit of something substantial: I am seeking money. I give my best energies to my daily business. I like it: it is promising. If no unusual calamity befal us, in the course of ten or fifteen years I shall be in a position to indulge in these dreams. I admire Miss Sybil greatly, but as for spoons— Pshaw! Do I look like a man that would grow spoony?"

"What a tremendous philosopher you are!" answered Clinton, with admiration. "I had a sneaking hope that you would be attracted by a dear little lady that I know. But I'll tell her that your soul is swallowed up in money. She will hardly believe it—"

"Don't trouble yourself," said Trumpley; "my remark was almost too sweeping. I knew you were frightfully jealous, and only wished to ease your mind. But I can easily imagine that a precious angel—such as I have dreamed about—could blow my money schemes to the dogs with one flap of her wings. Besides, my dear mother should have a companion. I may conclude to marry for her sake."

"Very kind of you, Wailes," replied Clinton, stretching himself out upon the sofa; "read the letters, you deceitful old humbug, and I'll take a nap."

Within the hour the nap was interrupted by the arrival of Doctor

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Maguire and the return of Memnon. The note had been delivered at Halidon; Miss Grahame had not retired, and she sent a dainty little note in reply, saying she would be at Beechwood early in the morning, and that Mrs. Wailes would follow later. Dora was sleeping peacefully, and Doctor Maguire retired. The house was quiet again, Clinton making good progress in his second nap, and Wailes engrossed in the letters, when the hall-clock struck four.

The letters were all from Daisy Grahame or her husband, and were all addressed to Mrs. Mabel Stratton. The first related the story of Daisy's marriage, and referred to Mr. Trumpley's courtship of Dora. The second told circumstantially of Dora's marriage in Paris; this was the first letter dated at Maison Rouge. There were half-a-dozen letters, all written within the month, referring to their life at Baden, hinting vaguely at some cause of distress, and once alluding to Mr. Trumpley's unfortunate "entanglements." A later letter, written by Mr. Grahame after Trumpley's death, expressed the writer's conviction that he had been the victim of a wicked conspiracy, in which Captain Merton and "the woman Radcliffe" were chief conspirators. Trump read this letter carefully, twice. The next letter told of the burial of Mr. Trumpley at Merton, and deplored the serious illness of Miss Edith Trumpley. "If I could have seen her," Mr. Grahame wrote, "I would have explained many things to her which I cannot venture to write. If Daisy gets strong again, we will return to Gloucester in the spring." He also regretted that "Mr. Grippe, a young banker at Gloucester, who had been at Baden when they were there, was confined to his room by a frightful attack of asthma. He had seen Harold the day before he died, and might possibly have told me some things I desired to know."

Hist! What noise is that? Oh, the clock, striking five. No, some one is moving in the hall below. The outer door has a peculiar creak; Wailes had noticed it when he entered the house. Surely, the door opened.

He laid down the letter, and taking the candle, moved softly to the door. No harm to go down and look. Ah! here are the Göttingen blades; he would take one. As he opened the door, Clinton awoke. At the same instant, the snap of a key slipping from the wards was heard. Clinton with moccasined feet came noiselessly to his side, wide-awake and composed as possible.

"Burglarious!" he whispered; "the rascals are working at the plate-chest. Hold a moment."

He threw off his gown as he spoke, took a revolver from the wall

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and stuck it in his waistband. Then seizing the other sword, he nodded to Wailes, and they passed out into the corridor.

"Be discreet, Wailes," he said; "don't kill if you can help it. We may have to maim the rogues, but let us be merciful."

CHAPTER LVIII.

The Second Rescue.

Munseer Blowell's repeater had deceived him. It was not one and three-quarters, but four o'clock that it announced. Time had flitted away on silken wings while they walked from Merton; and while they rested on the mill-bench, and while they were discussing the rights of man and very uncommon sense in the quiet lane, they loitered and time sped on. The hall-clock struck five as the locksmith threw back the bolts on the outer door.

Thick darkness in the hall. Munseer Blowell, dagger in hand, stepped lightly past his companions and entered. The others, encouraged by his bold example, followed. Moving cautiously along the wall, the locksmith found the great chest. He announced the fact in a hoarse whisper. "Here it is! Now you two keep quiet and listen."

A faint rattle of the skeleton-keys; he had to select the proper one by feeling. Presently they heard it grating in the lock. Almost too much noise, Mr. Locksmith!

"Cuss the tumbler!" said he, after a futile effort or two; "it falls in a new place every time."

"My goot friend," said Munseer Blowell, "I have matches in my pocket. Will a light aid you?"

"Don't want no lights, Johnny," said Podd; "can't you bust the lid open?"

But light came very unexpectedly. The door at the end of the hall opened suddenly, and a flare of light poured in. The back corridor illuminated by two candles placed on a bracket against the wall just opposite the door. Two men in their shirt-sleeves, each with a shining blade in his right hand, standing in the doorway. The locksmith dropped his keys as he rose, and with prompt courage dashed through the door by which he had entered, pulling it after him, to baffle

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possible pursuers, and fled gallantly to the main gate on the highroad. It was locked, but fear lent him vigor, and he cleared the hedge at a bound. Taking the road to Gloucester, he ran with increasing speed, until a passing vehicle met him. Then, tearing through the hedge again, he continued his flight by lanes and byways until he reached Gloucester common. He lay down here under the trees, watching the fading stars until he regained his breath, and then walked soberly into the city.

"Monsieur Blauvelt!" said Wailes, as Johnny disappeared; "and in a new *rôle!*"

"Zee odd Tromp!" answered Munseer Blowell; "*sauve qui peut!*" He darted to the front door, which Podd had opened, after fumbling with the lock two or three precious minutes. Out in the air at last, he rushed past Podd, reached the gate below the stables, and raced down the lane, Podd following, and gradually gaining on him. He caught his arm at last, a short distance from the gate.

"Hold on, pardner!" said the gardener; "this is not English fashion, to run like hares at the first blow. If Johnny had stood by us—"

"A thousand thunders!" replied Munseer; "quit my arm, or I'll use my dagger on you! Ha! they come! They bring chains, I hear them rattle!"

"Chains be blowed!" answered Mr. Podd, angrily. "Put up your frog-sticker. Cuss your French liver!"

"Ah, you will have it then," said Blauvelt, turning suddenly upon Podd, who retreated a step before the gleaming dagger. And as they glared at each other, a new actor appeared, just visible in the twilight.

Tiger, his chain dragging after him. His vision was better than that of bipeds, and he quickly recognised the king, and the antagonism between the monarch and the courtier. Rearing his huge body on his hind legs, he threw himself upon Blauvelt, and fastened his yellow fangs in the Frenchman's throat. There was a momentary struggle, and man and dog rolled together upon the ground.

This is a sorry termination of an illustrious career, Mr. Blauvelt! But there is no help for it.

Podd seized the chain and tugged manfully at it. In vain. Tiger had been fasting, and he tore away at Blauvelt's throat, regardless of cuffs and kicks. Then Podd knelt on the ground beside him, and seizing Blauvelt's dagger which lay on the grass, he drove it into the dog's neck.

It was the common mistake of those who practise kingcraft. The

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subject, loyal and obedient, who had been content to serve with unmurmuring fidelity, who had taken cruel treatment so long and patiently, licking the hand that smote him, forgot everything but this last injury, and quitting the still carcase of the courtier, caught King Podd by the shoulder, and with savage fury tore at his tough muscles.

Clinton and Wailes had followed the fugitives, and reached the scene at this critical moment. The dawn had come.

Tiger was embarrassed by his riches. So far backward as his canine memory extended, he had been chained to a box, and had only been able to growl and snap at passers-by. But here, suddenly, with new freedom thrust upon him, he had very nearly committed two murders, and now two more were possible. Releasing Podd's shoulder, he dropped his head and rushed at Clinton, his jaws dripping blood.

It was the common mistake of democracy, learned in nothing but the invincibility of brute-force. Tiger's loyalty to Podd was a caricature of the allegiance due to the lord of creation from the subordinate orders. Tiger's assault upon Clinton was a flagrant denial of this lordship, albeit enforced by intellect and virtue.

Clinton stuck the sword in the ground, drew the pistol from his waistband, and put a bullet in Tiger's brain when he was within three feet of him. The dog rolled over on the roadside, jerked out his legs convulsively once, and then remained motionless.

"It is the miller's dog," said Wailes.

"Then he has met his proper doom," answered Clinton. "What an enormous brute he is! He has throttled both our burglars, I believe. Is not this Podd?"

"Yes."

"Hillo, Podd!" said Clinton; "look up, man! Where are you hurt?"

Podd answered with a groan. He was meditating a plan of escape, and meantime silence was golden.

"He has been wounded somewhere," said Wailes; "look at this bloody dagger."

"This is Blauvelt beyond doubt," said Clinton, "and I think he is sped. The dog has lacerated his throat terribly. Wailes, we must get them to the house somehow. I will go for Memnon. Will you wait here?"

"Yes; but hark! I hear wheels."

"Ah!" said Clinton, "they are coming down the lower lane. Run

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down to the fork, and I will cross here; one of us will intercept them. What's that?"

A shrill cry came floating over the hedges.

"Wailes! Clinton! Help!"

The two men heard. Clinton knew it was a woman's voice, and that she called on him for aid. He leaped the hedge, rushed across the triangular meadow, and reached the lower lane as the vehicle rattled past.

Wailes knew it was Mabel's voice; he had heard it once before, when she, recovering from her swoon, thought she was in deadly peril. She was in peril again, and called him — him! Down to the fork of the lanes like a shot. The distance was not measured, nor the time recorded; but when he stood there breathless, watching the approaching vehicle, it seemed to him that he had reached the goal at one leap.

Rad Merton's trap. Tim driving furiously. Rad kneeling on the back-seat, holding Mabel in his arms, and forcing a cloak over her head. He planted himself in the middle of the lane, sword in hand. He would stab the lead-horse, leap aside and throttle Merton. Foolish boy! the onset of that furious team would brush you out of the road like a heap of chaff. But he stood there without doubt or trepidation.

A shot. Maggie leaped from the ground and fell. The horse in the shafts stumbled over her body, and Tim rolled down from his perch. A pale face, relentless as death, came up the side of the wrecked dog-cart, and a pair of iron hands caught Merton's collar and hurled him in the dust beside his stunned servant; and the same hands, transformed into velvet, lifted Mabel from the seat and bore her swiftly away. She freed her face from the mantle and peered anxiously at her rescuer. "Is it you!" she murmured; "is it indeed you? Ah, I am safe now!"

Trumpley made no reply. He threw away his weapon and crushed her delicate body in his arms.

"Let me down, please," she said; "I can walk. I am not hurt. Did you kill him?"

"Oh no; but I'll go back and kill him if he has harmed you."

"No, no! do not leave me. Where am I?"

"At Beechwood. Don't look over there; a fellow got hurt this morning — dog bit him."

"Did you hear me call you?" she said, blushing.

"Yes; I should have heard you if I had been dead."

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This was an original proposition, and required meditation. Mabel was silent.

"How did it happen?" said Trump.

"He met me in the road. De Witt sent for me last night, and I started at dawn. James opened the gate for me, and went back for his coat. Instead of waiting for him, I walked up the road. But it would have made no difference; that wretched man had his groom with him, and they would have murdered James probably, if he had been with me. Still, I cannot account for his absence."

James had snatched up his coat, and while struggling into it in the dim light, missed his footing and rolled into the kitchen-area, striking his thick skull on the stone steps, and falling senseless at the bottom.

"What did he say to you?" said Trump. "Never mind the dog, he is dead."

"I cannot tell you. Ugh! he said he loved me — the brute!"

"Did he? When did you see him first?"

"On that day when I ran away. Ah! you have never cared to ask me why. And now you have saved me the second time —"

"We will talk of it hereafter. I know you had a good reason for your flight. You shall tell me this evening. Here is Clinton."

Clinton came flying over the hedge and joined them. He caught Mabel's hand and kissed it, laughing hilariously.

"We are even, Wailes," he said. "That was a neat shot. Do you know that Mabel kept popping her pretty head in the way? I had to wait until they were almost upon you before I fired. You reckless vagabond! they would have trampled you to death in another minute. Let us get my pretty cousin to the house, and then we will go back and look at the wreck. Where's Podd?"

That estimable citizen was reposing on the other side of the hedge. He had crawled away from the scene of conflict as soon as their backs were turned; and when their voices died away, he took to his heels again, and reached the mill as the sun appeared above the eastern horizon.

Mabel told her story more succinctly as they proceeded. Clinton led them to the conservatory wall, and opening the secret door, led the way to the drawing-room. Dora was there, and Dr. Maguire was feeling her pulses. Clinton paused upon the threshold, but Maguire beckoned him in.

"All right, me boy," he said. "Pulses as calm as an infant's; no oppression about the head. All we want is quiet, and the gurrill you were to get. Have you brought her? The drownded Duchess, be jabers!"

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"Aunt Dora," said Clinton, "I could not bring you Daisy; but I have brought Daisy's daughter Mabel. Take her to your arms."

Which she did.

CHAPTER LIX.

SWORD-PLAY.

Taking Memnon and the doctor, Clinton and Wailes went back to the spot where Blauvelt was lying. Memnon took a stable-door from the hinges, and they placed the unfortunate philosopher upon it. He was not dead.

"I am thinking he is beyond the reach of drugs," said Maguire, examining his throat; "but we will see what can be done. Lift him gintly, and we will get him to the house and put in a stitch or two. You are only in the way, Mr. Clinton; we three can carry him."

Clinton relinquished his hold, and seeing them through the gate, returned for the sword he had left sticking in the ground. Where was the other? Why, Wailes had it. He saw it in his hand when he put the bullet into Maggie's ear. He must have thrown it down in the lane. Only a step; he would go look for it.

Before he reached the fork he found it. It was in the hand of Radcliffe Merton. Clinton suppressed a sigh of regret, and accepted the inevitable.

His neat attire torn and dusty, his brow scratched and bleeding, he was not attractive in appearance. Over the malignant face that confronted Clinton, the fine gauze of conventional propriety was drawn.

"Are you seeking me?" said Merton, bowing politely.

"No; I am seeking the weapon you carry," answered Clinton, with cold composure.

"Ah! Well, you shall have it presently. Am I right in supposing you shot my mare?"

"Yes. I had some thought of shooting you instead."

"Indeed! May I ask your reason?"

"You were abducting a lady with brutal violence—"

"Is that all? Cannot one pick up a stray milliner or governess in the road without incurring your displeasure?"

"We will not discuss the matter," said Clinton, gravely. "Oblige me with the sword, if you please, and get away."

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"I am afraid you will have to take it," replied Merton. "It is such a fine, bright morning, that a little exercise will do you good."

"Excuse me," said Clinton; "I cannot consent to gratify you."

"The last time, I had the pleasure of making a hole in your Yankee body. I was younger then, and only half did the work."

"Let that suffice," replied Clinton. "I have kept these swords ever since you wounded me at Göttingen, intending to renew the contest some day; but the obstacles are insurmountable. Give me the sword and begone."

"Pardon me. Can I not say something or do something that will induce you to change your mind? Are you interested in this Grahame wench?"

"Shame on you, Merton! I will not talk with so utter a blackguard. Keep the sword if you will, and go to the devil!"

"All in good time. Please enumerate the obstacles you spoke of before you go. Will you excuse me if I remove my coat; I see you are without yours?"

"Mr. Merton," said Clinton, "look you, I am not the clumsy boy you wounded in Germany; I am an expert swordsman. I do not know the man among my instructors who can master me. The chief obstacle is the dead certainty that I should kill you."

"How considerate!" replied Radcliffe, "and, if you will excuse me, I will add, how conceited! Two minutes will suffice to convince you of your error."

"I promised a gentle lady that I would spare you," said Clinton, reluctantly. "I must keep my word."

"How gallant!" answered Merton, stepping back and taking off his coat. "If you turn, I will stab you in the back. You miserable adventurer! you insolent Yankee sneak! defend yourself, or die without resistance!"

With two strides he reached the middle of the lane, and crossed swords with Clinton, who coolly awaited his approach.

The bright blades glanced in the sunlight as they went through the ordinary parades of thrust and parry. In Radcliffe's baleful eyes there were desperate determination and malice. Over Clinton's manly countenance there gathered a stern tranquillity that was portentous. He soon discovered that Merton demanded all his attention, and that the most exact precision was needed to deflect his sword from his body. His skill was a vast improvement upon that of the German student.

Then there was a rapid interchange of thrusts, and the hilts of the weapons clashed together so violently that Merton was driven backward two paces.

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"Let it end here, I pray you," said Clinton. "You have doubtless discovered that you are no match for me; I could have killed you twice."

"Yankee brag, Mr. Stratton! Let us resume."

At the second encounter Clinton faced the sun. Radcliffe had gradually drawn him into this position across the narrow lane. The American discovered the trick on the instant, and drew the point of his sword across the other's face. It was a mere scratch; but Merton drew back a step, and Clinton turned his back to the sun as he gained the middle of the lane again. With patient skill Radcliffe worked around his antagonist, and once more got the sun in his eyes. Pressing upon him with rapid thrusts, the hilts clashed together again, and again Merton was driven backward.

They stood apart a minute. With all Merton's rascality, he was a man of dauntless courage, yet there crept into his mind a gloomy conviction of his inferiority. He glanced at Clinton's face, cold, stern and confident, and once more approached with extended weapon.

"Take notice," said Clinton as the swords crossed, "I will not have the sun in my eyes. So long as you keep in the road, well; but if you persist in driving me to the hedge, I shall do you some terrible injury."

Radcliffe made no answer; he had made up his mind. He would take a thrust if he must, but he would kill Clinton on this round.

"I will give you another warning," said Clinton. "Your waistcoat is buttoned with three buttons; I will take off the middle one."

There was another sharp struggle, the blades flashing like electric streams between them, and Clinton sprang backwards, lowering his point.

"The button is gone," he said, composedly. "Will it satisfy you?"

It was a white Marseilles waistcoat, double-breasted. The buttons were little golden balls, secured in the eyelet-holes by rings. Radcliffe was partial to finery of this sort, especially in evening dress. He took off the garment and laid it on his coat by the roadside, and striding forward, confronted Clinton once more.

"You are expert," he said, as their blades clashed; "but that is not very remarkable. Yankees have a natural aptitude for picking up gold. Perhaps you got your money in that fashion."

The grassy lane was trampled in a large circle, which they had traversed many times as they changed their positions in the fierce encounter. The chirp of a bird in the hedge was the only sound heard in the still morning, except the sharp click of steel and the

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tramp of their feet as they moved around on their battle-ground. Pressing upon Merton, Clinton gradually backed him up to the hedge, and with a sudden sweep of his blade tore Radcliffe's weapon from his hand. Advancing a step, he placed his point on his adversary's throat for an instant, and again stepped backward, lowering his sword. Merton stood motionless before him until he retired, then, leaping into the circle, regained his sword, and faced him again, panting and indomitable. Clinton held up his left hand with imperious dignity, and Radcliffe paused.

"How often shall I give you your life?" said Clinton, sternly; "let this end here. By all rule you are bound to acknowledge yourself vanquished. If you are a gentleman, you will accept your defeat and begone."

"My life is worthless to me so long as you live," answered Radcliffe. "You have some tricks of fence that are novel, but I am learning. Let us resume."

"Hear another word," said Clinton: "you are a bad lot, Merton, but you face death so manfully that I cannot find it in my heart to harm you. Get away now with a whole skin, and let me keep my promise."

"Was it silly Sybil who pleaded for me?" answered Radcliffe with a sneer. "Pooh! you must have done some extensive bragging as well as some extensive lying to extort the plea from her. I know you have been sneaking about Merton Park traducing me, and I am going to pay you off this morning. Come on!"

"It is inevitable!" said Clinton, furiously. "Look your last upon the sunlight! You are a blot upon the fair face of nature, and I am about to take you off!"

In this last encounter both men fought with the most elaborate precision. Merton exposed himself recklessly, yet pressed so vigorously upon his adversary that he was kept upon the defensive. Twice Clinton's exact parry merely deflected Merton's blade enough to escape the thrust, which passed through his shirt-sleeve. Instead of the usual interval between them, they gradually worked closer each to the other, and each intent upon what he meant should be the final *coup*. Clinton's purpose was to inflict upon Radcliffe a precisely similar hurt to that he had received at Göttingen. The slender blades quivered in their strong hands, and seemed to twist themselves together in the rapid interchanges. The muscles of their right arms swelled out in knots as with grim ferocity they stamped upon the dewy grass and circled around in the lane. Each watched for the crisis, and at last it came.

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"*Un, deux, coupée; habet!*" said Clinton; "straight carte over the arm!"

The fencer will understand the manœuvre, which, if rapidly executed, is effectual. Instead of the parry, however, Radcliffe recoiled a half-step, turning his wrist in the parade of *seconde*, and throwing Clinton's sword upward with his forearm, the sharp point caught Merton above the eye, while his blade passed through Clinton's arm, under the muscles of his shoulder, grazing his ribs, and so out at the spine, pinning his arm to his body. They fell apart without a word, and the faintness that crept over the stalwart American brought to his memory the German duel. Merton, relinquishing his sword, stumbled across the lane and fell.

"Wailes, me boy," said a voice, "he is here; and — be jabers! so is Rad Merton! — and we want two barn-doors."

"I don't need any, Doctor," said Clinton. "If you will please pull this infernal hot skewer out of my arm I can get along. Jewhillikin! how you hurt! Look to Mr. Merton, Doctor; I am afraid he is hurt more seriously."

"And who the divil hurt him?" said Maguire. "Tare an' ages! what possessed you to play with such dangerous implements? It is a wonder you arn't both kilt."

"Doctor," said Radcliffe, "am I blind?"

"It looks very like it. We'll take you to the house and examine —"

"Never! My groom is in the lane below, not the quarter of a mile off. If you will lead me to him I can get to Gloucester. Will you lend me your arm? My coat is here somewhere. Ah! thanks. Now I can walk if you lead me. Can't you bind my handkerchief over my eyes?"

Trumpley took the handkerchief, folded it, and tied it over his brow. With the blood streaming from his arm and back Clinton drew near.

"Merton," he said, his voice tremulous with tender pity, "I would freely give one of my eyes to restore yours if I could. The memory of this morning's work will embitter my future life. I entreat you to come to Beechwood and have your wound —"

"Many thanks," said Radcliffe; "no! I should die there when I might recover anywhere else. Hearken! Do not waste sympathy upon me; the chief regret I shall feel, if my hurt is serious, will be that I cannot see to kill you. Good-morning!"

Tim had repaired damages to a certain extent. The dead mare

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was lying stiff in the lane, but the other horse was unhurt, and the harness patched up; and with the fumes of the Burgundy still confusing his brain, Tim drove slowly back to Gloucester, his wounded master sitting erect and silent beside him, enduring agony, yet making no sign.

CHAPTER LX.

High Dutch.

The breakfast at Beechwood was delayed. Blauvelt's wounds were dressed by Doctor Maguire, and he was sent to Gloucester Hospital. The pony-phaeton was despatched to Halidon for Mrs. Wailes, and upon her arrival she and Mabel were left with Dora, while Maguire gave attention to Clinton's hurts. The doctor put in sundry stitches with grim satisfaction; while the patient groaned, and heroically refrained from objurgatory remarks. It was done at last, the arm bound up in pasteboards, and Clinton remanded to bed under pain of fever, gangrene, tetanus, and dissolution. Mrs. Wailes made tea, and her son and the doctor wrought havoc among the biscuits and chops that immortalised Phillis. Mr. Grippe stopped at the gate, and took Trumpley to town with him. Doctor Maguire invaded Dora's chamber, found her pulses accelerated, administered an opiate, sternly ordered perfect quiet in a darkened room, and departed for Merton, promising to return in the evening. He was also required to carry the intelligence of Radcliffe's "accident" to Merton Park, and to suppress or embellish the narrative according to his own excellent judgment. As soon as the gig was out of sight, Clinton summoned Memnon, and with his assistance dressed, buttoning his coat (with an empty sleeve) across his breast, and was driven to Gloucester.

Mrs. Wailes and Mabel had possession of Beechwood at luncheon time. Mr. Clinton's instructions to Phillis were simply to take her orders from the ladies. He returned in the afternoon, went soberly to bed, and waited for the doctor's return and his permission to rise.

The dinner was rather more lively. Mr. Clinton was allowed to come down, and lie upon the sofa while his guests dined. Dora was better: tranquil, and disposed to sleep. Milly Galt, overflowing with happiness, had been formally inducted into the office of lady's-maid to Dora, having been sent by the doctor early in the day. Clinton was

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making sundry wry faces over a bowl of panada, which was the only nutriment the inexorable medico permitted.

"This duck is positively enchanting," quoth the doctor, who occupied the head of the table. "Mrs. Wailes, let me send you a wing."

"Give it to Mr. Clinton, Doctor," said Mrs. Wailes; "he will starve on that panada."

"Not a morsel! Starve? He would live on pure water ten days. Panada is strong diet for him."

"How long shall I live, Doctor, if I take a little bread and meat?" asked Clinton.

"Not over a week."

"And how long do you intend to feed me on panada?"

"If we heal up with the first intention," said the doctor, "you may have tay and toast a week hence."

"Very well. I'll make my will to-morrow, and then commit suicide on beef and mutton."

"If you keep quiet in bed all day to-morrow," said the doctor, "it is barely possible that I'll give you tay and toast at night."

"Tea and toast be — that is, I'd as lieve stick to panada. Wailes," he continued, in Greek, "I went to Gloucester this morning to see about Merton. He will not be blind."

"Where did you find him?" answered Wailes, in the same tongue.

"He has my old rooms in Queen Street. They have sent to London for Sir Thomas Morgan, the great oculist. But his eyes are not seriously injured — Heaven be praised!"

"What are you young gentlemen saying?" said Mrs. Wailes.

"Clinton is only airing his Greek a little, Mother. You will excuse him, ladies, as he is feverish and his mind is wandering."

"Certainly," interposed Maguire; "let him go on. It will do him good."

"Wailes," continued Clinton, "I *tried* to kill him. He was so fierce and bloodthirsty, that I lost my temper for one short minute, and it was done. But my point glanced on the bone, and only tore the flesh over his right eye, passed through the left eyelid, but did not wound the organ. I was with him when the doctor made the examination."

"With him?" said Wailes.

"Yes. He was savage at first, when Tim told him I was there. I went in without invitation or announcement. I told him about Gretchen and her death; he had to hear me. And I discovered at last the cause of his insane desire to kill me. What think you was the provocation?"

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"The old quarrel in Germany?"

"No. He thought I was courting that lovely maiden by your side; and he was wonderfully mollified when I told him she was destined for Another."

"Gentlemen," said Mabel, in melodious Greek, "it is proper that I should tell you I understand you."

"The devil!" said Clinton, in good English.

"I think you had better keep to your gibberish," said Mrs. Wailes, highly offended.

"I beg a thousand pardons," said Clinton, humbly; "but you did not hear what Mabel said?"

The violet eyes were sparkling with merriment.

"Well, Ma'am," continued Clinton—"Oh! how my arm hurts!—She merely announced that she understood Greek, after Wailes and I had told no end of secrets."

"Greek is a very unsafe tongue, Mr. Clinton," said Maguire. "I allowed you to go on because I was interested; but how the blazes do you think I could have got on in my profession without a smatterin' of the ancient tongues. And now I can tell you that Radcliffe may have inflammation; that will play the mischief with your diagnosis."

"And I suppose I may as well add," said Mrs. Wailes, "that Trump recited his early Greek lessons to me, and that I also am tolerably familiar with that tongue."

"Of all the awful sells I ever heard of," said Clinton, "this is the worst! This arm will drive me mad! I think I will go back to my dismal couch."

"Suppose you thry a bit of Haybrew," said the doctor, with a strong brogue.

Clinton groaned.

"Please continue your account," said Mabel. "You can resume the vernacular; only your Greek is far better than your English."

Clinton raised himself on his unhurt arm and glared at her speechless.

"I have made a little vocabulary," continued Mabel, "which we will go over presently. Tell us more about that unhappy man."

"But the very thing I wished to tell Wailes you must not hear," answered Clinton.

"It will keep, probably," said Mabel, with a blush. "Mrs. Wailes desires to hear a more coherent account of your doings this morning."

"I am too faint to talk," replied Clinton; "loss of blood and starvation begin to tell upon me."

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The doctor took up the wing of the duck, shook off all the fragments of dressing, put it on a plate with a small slice of bread, and sent it to Clinton.

"Afther goin' to Gloucester," said the doctor, "in disobedience to my orders, you don't deserve a taste. But I'm forgiving in my disposition. Masticate thoroughly!"

"Memnon," said Clinton, with his mouth full, "throw this panada out of the window! Doctor, may I have another wing?"

"Not a feather!"

"I've a great mind to eat the bone, then."

"Clinton, tell us about your encounter," said Trump, "and I will smuggle some food to you to-night."

"I walked down the lane," responded Clinton, promptly, "got the sword I had left there, and then went for yours. You threw it away, and no wonder! I think you had enough to carry without it—I mean a feminine walking dictionary."

"You should say 'keyarry,'" answered Mabel spitefully, "as you say 'keyar' for car, and 'keyarpet' for carpet."

"Very well," said Clinton; "then I met Mr. Merton, who had obligingly brought Wailes' sword with him. He asked me if I shot his mare, and candor compelled me to acknowledge the fact. He then made other remarks the reverse of complimentary, and finally invited me to renew a contest which we began in Germany some years ago."

"Well?" said Mrs. Wailes.

"I declined, Ma'am, most positively. He refused to give up his weapon, and I told him to keep it. He then said he would stab me in the back if I refused to face him, and he meant all he said. There was nothing left for me to do but defend myself."

"What next?" said Mrs. Wailes. They had all risen from the table and were standing in a circle around Clinton's sofa.

"I can hardly tell. I know my purpose was unwavering to content myself with defensive warfare. Several times he exposed himself, but I did not harm him, except to scratch his face, and that only by way of warning. I cannot tell how long we were at it. I had my hands full, Wailes! The fellow fences like an expert. At last he said something that exasperated me furiously, and he glared so malignantly at me out of his cat-eyes that in the last fierce skrimmage I tried to kill him. I knew I was going to catch it, before he hit me. He assaulted me so resolutely, so vigorously, and yet so recklessly, exposing himself without hesitation, that I saw clearly I

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must disable him or die. If I had not thrown up my arm when I felt his point, it would have gone through my body. Once I disarmed him and put my sword to his throat — like those Dutchmen used to do, Wailes, you remember. He stood like a statue, with his arms folded, gloomy and defiant; and when I stepped back, he clutched his sword again and came at me. He is a born devil!"

"Poor Radcliffe!" said Mrs. Wailes. "What will be the end of this? What will people say —"

"People will know nothing about it, Ma'am," said Doctor Maguire. "I tould a cock-and-bull story at the Park; nobody knows how his eyes were hurt, nobody knows how Mr. Clinton was hurt. The burglars will get the credit of most of the damage. Let us all kape quiet, and decline any conversation on the subject, in view of pending legal proceedings. Radcliffe will not be apt to spake of it; his groom is a close-mouthed rashkill, and will tell nothing about the drunken frolics of his master. He was blind drunk av coorse, or he would niver have tried to carry off the Duchess —"

"Why do you call me Duchess, Doctor?" said Mabel.

"Mars Clint," said Memnon, putting in his head, "'skuse me, Sar, but Mr. Grippe done wait half-an-hour in de parlor. He come in while you was all talkin' Dutch."

"Bedad," said the doctor, "there's your answer, Miss Mabel."

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Book VI.

THE HALIDON RUBBER.

CHAPTER LXI.

Exit Radcliffe.

The gentle reader will not have failed to notice that the events recorded in the preceding Book were all compressed within the limits of two days. The arrival of Mr. Grippe at Beechwood disarranged some deep-laid schemes, and prevented the enlargement of that portion of the history beyond reasonable bounds. Mr. Trumpley Wailes had in his mind's eye a prolonged dialogue with the lady of the violet orbs. And the orbs, in innocent unconsciousness, were shooting arrows, tipped with gold and jewels, into the heart of the mercenary wretch, whose affections were set on Mammon. She had a way of listening intently whenever he spoke to her, as if she desired to catch not only each word, but each intonation, and then analyse them secretly. Both she and Trump had several little speeches prepared, touching rescues and flights, and it is highly probable that some serious entanglement would have followed if Mr. Grippe had not opportunely arrived to prevent the catastrophe. The little conversation they had at dinner, where there were listeners on all sides, was totally inconclusive and unsatisfactory.

Mr. Grippe promptly announced the object of his visit. He had come for the ladies. Instructed by Clinton, Wailes had informed him of the existence of Mrs. Harold Trumpley, and the banker had been in a state of great agitation all day. But he was quite tranquil now, and rather startled Mr. Clinton by demanding the surrender of Mrs. Trumpley. Her presence at Halidon was absolutely necessary, as he

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had a trust to discharge in which she was personally interested. Mrs. Trumpley was quietly sleeping, having been drugged by Maguire, and the doctor positively forbade any disturbance of her slumbers; and if the business were at all exciting, he would strongly protest against it for several days to come. After much debate, it was agreed that Mrs. Trumpley should come to Halidon in three or four days, and in the meantime Mrs. Wailes and Miss Grahame should visit her daily, provided they returned to Halidon in time for dinner.

The arrangement was made without consulting Mabel or Trumpley. The latter was especially disgusted, as his dear mother could not reach Beechwood until he had left for that horrid bank, and she would have to return to array herself for dinner before he got back. He had engaged to spend a week with Clinton; and now that the poor fellow was wounded, he could not think of manufacturing an excuse to shorten his visit.

Mabel was disgusted, because she longed to spend as much time as possible with her new-found aunt. She did not care for dinners; but there was poor Heloïse, and she did not think it fair to forsake her entirely. Why did not Mr. Grippe or somebody else suggest bringing Heloïse to enliven poor De Witt while he was swathed in bandages? She would be very willing to come with her, and she could amuse Aunt Dora, while Heloïse amused De Witt.

One thing was settled: she and Mrs. Wailes had to go home at once. Mr. Grippe was obstinate; he had left Heloïse all alone, and they would please get ready.

Mr. Wailes wrapped his mother's shawl carefully around her shoulders, while Miss Grahame was donning hat and mantle up stairs.

"Trump," whispered Mrs. Wailes, "there is Another that I have found —"

"I don't believe there is Another —"

"But there is. I asked Mabel if Mr. Clinton had manifested anything beyond cousinly affection, and she says he also has Another."

"If that is the case, Mother," answered Trump, "these two Anothers will be like two negatives in English, and prove mutually destructive. What else did she say, Mother?"

"Very little," said Mrs. Wailes, dryly. "If you intend to go droning through life like an overgrown calf, it is very likely that Another, number three, will appear upon the stage. I happen to know that Algernon Walton adores Mabel."

"The little rascal!"

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"He will be Sir Algernon Walton, though. He seems to be a bright youth; I think I will recommend him to Mabel. He calls her Cousin Mabel too."

"I like his impudence," said Trump.

"So do I. He had not been in the house with Mabel half-an-hour before he had made love to her decidedly—I mean at Halidon at the dinner-party."

"If I were sure of your approval, Mother, I might court Miss Grahame; not too rapidly, though. You see, Mother, she thinks she is under no end of obligations to me. She referred to Merton's Brook this morning, and she adds this last adventure to that. Now, I am not going to make love to her while she thinks that sort of nonsense. She would conclude she ought to sacrifice herself to a fellow that pulled her out of the water, and helped her out of Rad Merton's trap. Please let me court in my own fashion."

"Very well, Trump," answered Mrs. Wailes; "I shall not interfere. I have had plenty of opportunities to court for you, but have not even hinted that I should like to call Mabel my daughter. You know she is Daisy's daughter?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, if you don't begin your courtship pretty soon I mean to adopt her; then she will be your sister. I shall invite my young friend Algernon to visit me; he is a well-grown youth, and Mabel remembers him as a play-fellow, no doubt.—All ready, Mr. Grippe. Good-bye, Mr. Clinton. Don't come out. Come, Mabel."

Mr. Wailes assisted the ladies. Mr. Grippe got in after they were seated. Trump shook hands with his mother first, and then with Miss Grahame. It was such a little mite of a hand! Trump wished he could cut it off and hang it round his neck with the other fetich. By-the-bye, he had kissed it, that is, the other fetich, once or twice, while Clinton was sleeping and he was reading. And now he kissed his hand to the retreating carriage in the darkness. It was the baldest hypocrisy; he was only kissing the fingers that had held the little lump of warm velvet a minute ago.

"My friend," said Clinton, when he reëntered, "I appreciate your kindness; well do I know that Halidon eclipses Beechwood—"

"There you go again with your humbug! Doctor, may Clinton smoke?"

"Of course he may," answered Clinton. "Come with us, Doctor, and try my Lynchburg tobacco. How long do you mean to keep my arm sewed up?"

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"Two months, if you're restive," replied the Doctor, promptly; "if you obey my directions, I may relase you in a week. I must be aff. Let us see your tobacco; if it is quite mild, you may have a whiff."

Instead of getting off, the Doctor took a pipe with the younger gentlemen. The tobacco was pronounced entirely safe, and when Maguire rose to depart, Clinton gave him a neat little bag of tobacco, with pipe and stem.

"I think you may ate a beefsteak for breakfast," said the Doctor, examining the patient's pulses. "Seriously, the main thing is to remain quiet while the wound is healing; a little inflammation would play the divil with your arm. Will you promise to go to bed by ten o'clock, and to lie abed all day to-morrow?"

"If you say I must," answered Clinton.

"Thin, bedad, I say it!" responded the Doctor; "and now I'm aff in earnest. Squire Merton will be here to-morrow; what sort of a story do you intind to patch up for him?"

"Indeed I am not going to do any romancing, Doctor," answered Clinton; "if you expect me to corroborate your yarns you will be disappointed."

"I suppose you can hould your tongue," said Maguire. "I forbid any conversation on the subject of your hurts; it would tend to inflammation."

"Well, sir, I promise to avoid the topic; and if the Squire don't ask direct questions, I shall volunteer no information."

After the Doctor departed the friends drew up to the fire for a quiet talk over the events of the day.

"Wailes," began Clinton, "after a couple of fellows have been through such experiences as you and I, it is not possible to keep up a cold-blooded reserve. I want your advice. The Doctor has spun some astounding yarns at Merton Park, but I cannot maintain my present relations there under false pretences. I must tell Miss Sybil at least the exact truth about the scrimmage."

"Decidedly," said Wailes.

"Thank you; I knew you were true grit! Now, how am I to tell her? I am resolved to say nothing to her against Radcliffe; I have done him all the harm I shall ever inflict upon him. How his eyes escaped I cannot imagine; he must have had his sword in my arm at the instant I touched him."

"Suppose he had encountered me instead of you?"

"What would you have done Wailes?" said Clinton, curiously.

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"I think I should have run; or I should have suggested English fighting, with nature's weapons."

"And then?"

"And then I should have doubled him up in two minutes," answered Wailes.

"I saw you pull him out of his carriage," said Clinton, "and I am afraid you were not as gentle as you might have been."

"Ah! He was holding her—*her* in his arms. It is a wonder that I did not run him through; I had the sword in my hand, I remember. By-the-bye, he will expect me to atone for that assault."

"Not he," answered Clinton.

"Why not?"

"Because I had a little conversation with him this morning. He will go to Paris as soon as he can travel; his eyes require Continental skill."

Wailes puffed away at his pipe for some minutes in silence. He had known Radcliffe a good many years, and he had never known him to forego vengeance or forgive an injury. That he would demand satisfaction for the affront seemed to him as certain as to-morrow's sunrise; yet Clinton spoke so confidently that he was staggered.

"There is something more," said Wailes at last; "but I ask no questions: perhaps you should not tell me."

"On the contrary, I must tell you, for this is the agreement. I came very near blurting it out when we were doing the Greek. By-the-bye, did you notice Mabel's accent? Where did she get her Greek?"

"I was stunned," answered Trumpley. "It is my belief that the old goddesses we used to quote could not have uttered similar music. I suppose her father must have instructed her. What have you to tell me about Rad?"

"Not much. It was difficult to get the opportunity I desired, as I had to speak to him in private; but I managed it by talking German. First, I told him some things I happen to know about Dorado and his interest in it—no matter what it was. He was defiant still. Then I had to translate into German a little document I had written in good English. And he was not quite so defiant then, and consented to spend the remainder of his useful life on the Continent if you and I suppress this document. Here it is."

"What is it?" said Wailes.

"Only a dying confession. Before I called in Queen street I went to the hospital and saw Blauvelt. The physicians had informed him

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of his imminent danger, and he dictated his story, in which our friend Radcliffe is seriously compromised, and signed it before a magistrate. I wrote it with my sore arm; it hurt like blazes, too!"

CHAPTER LXII.

Some Dismissals.

Certain events followed the burglarious attempt upon Beechwood in orderly sequence. A grave, self-possessed gentleman had called upon Mr. Clinton early in the day, having previously questioned Mr. Wailes at the bank, and having obtained from him a succinct account of the night-alarm and the circumstances that followed. A prolonged interview with Munseer Blowell succeeded, and the grave gentleman, being assured by the attending physicians that the foreigner's hours were numbered, promised him entire immunity upon condition that he betrayed his comrades. To do Munseer Blowell justice, he stoutly refused this invitation, until his interlocutor gave him a list of the members of the Merton Liberal Club, and even repeated portions of his own admirable oration delivered the previous night. Mentally cursing the despotic government under whose tyrannous sway such occult police powers were possible, Mr. Blauvelt "leaked," to use the expressive term employed by his congeners. His goot friend Podd was already known, and his other goot friend, the locksmith "Johnny," without a patronymic, was identified by the bunch of skeleton keys found in the hall at Beechwood.

Johnny was furnished with lodgings in a stone building belonging to the State, and before noon Mr. Podd, who was found hidden in Tiger's vacated kennel, was accommodated with an adjoining apartment in the same establishment. No better proof of Mr. Podd's prejudice could be furnished than the parental care bestowed upon him by the powers he derided. His wounds were carefully dressed, his photograph taken, and the solitary door of his chamber (furnished free of rental) was securely locked and barred, his protector taking the key away with him. No enemy could break in upon him, neither could he incur any risk of harm by wandering out in the rascally world. His health was so sedulously guarded that beer and tobacco were kept from him, and he was even required to perform unaccus-

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tomed ablutions, under the sanitary regulations of his domicile. Mr. Podd was a philosopher, and he spent the greater portion of his time in sleep, during the absence of his attendant.

As Mr. Podd and Johnny both pass out of this history in the present chapter, it may not be amiss to anticipate a little, in order to give a connected account of their adventures. The slow-moving machinery of an effete government, administering obsolete laws, did not dispose of these cases until winter had possession of England, and Munseer Blowell, interred in September, was only remembered as an actor with Podd and Johnny in the nocturnal adventure at Beechwood. The latter was specially indignant when Mr. Clinton, who was required by the same shabby government to give his testimony, announced that the lock on the plate-chest was a burglar-proof lock, and not the same that Johnny had described with the erratic "tumbler." Johnny privately informed an obliging policeman who stood near him, that the inherent meanness of the American character was manifested in thus seducing him into profitless danger, by getting a new lock from London after he had mastered the mysteries of the old one. "If the old lock had been there where the tumbler fell, a little apast the 'alf-turn," he observed, "we should have been clean off before them swells woked."

The health of these worthies was of so much importance in the estimation of their guardians, that a change of climate was determined upon. Accordingly, Johnny and Podd took passage in a government vessel for a prolonged voyage, and for a permanent residence in a semi-tropical island near the antipodes. There they still reside, and the population of which they form a part is nearly unanimous in abhorrence of law and morals. It may, therefore, be concluded that the lines have at last fallen to them in pleasant places.

The clubs of which they were honored members deplored their loss very seriously. The Merton Club, of which Podd was president, fell into decay, and the occupant of the loft over the carriage-shop lamented the loss of the free gin grievously. The Gloucester Club is still in existence, and has passed resolutions since Podd's departure that totally dismembered the British Empire. Legislators and rulers are still keeping up a show of authority, but the Gloucester Liberals know it to be a sham and a delusion. It only remains for them to disband the police and tear down the Bastiles that dishonor the land, to make Britain a fair representation of that other kingdom that is paved with good intentions.

Mr. Radcliffe Merton sold his dog-cart and horse, discharged Tim.

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and went to Paris the day after his accident. He knew a famous oculist there, he said, and desired to place his eyes under his care. As he also passes from the present stage in this chapter, it may as well be stated here that his life is devoted to extracting something more than his allowance from his mother, in which efforts he is constantly baffled by her superior acuteness. His vision is good as ever, and his personal appearance is somewhat improved, as the scar on his brows has changed the feline expression of his eyes. He steadfastly declines all invitations to revisit England.

Dorado collapsed the day after the Squire's transfer. The great "property" representing millions, vanished into an extremely attenuated vapor far less tangible than atmospheric air. There were multitudes of small holders, widows, orphans, impecunious clergymen, single ladies of uncertain age, whose revenue had been very small when derived from consols, and who had placed their capital in the tempting Dorado. To all of these the loss was serious. Mr. Clinton lighted his pipe with his certificate before his arm was out of duress. An honorable official, who had believed in the scheme to an unlimited extent, and had innocently endorsed the prospectus, could not bear to hear it mentioned, and wept copiously when any one forced him to listen to the story of the fraud. His sufferings were all from an excess of benevolence, as his pecuniary loss was trifling, he having sold out before the collapse.

CHAPTER LXIII.

Cross Purposes.

Mr. Grippe arrived at the bank an hour earlier than usual. Wailes was already there, as the walk from Beechwood was short, and he was always restive until he had analysed the morning mail. Mr. Grippe found him immersed in a heap of letters.

"Dorado gone, sir," said Wailes, as Grippe hobbled by. "Here is a letter from De Lisle, who is in London, asking our assistance —"

"Assistance?" said Grippe, aghast.

"Yes; only to institute legal proceedings against the promoters of Dorado. He coolly takes it for granted that Browler Brothers are holders."

"He is an ass! Write him so," said Mr. Grippe.

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"I had better put it in French then," said Trump; "it sounds so abrupt in English. I *have* written him, regretting that we could not aid him, as we had no interest whatever in Dorado either for selves or clients."

"That is better," answered Mr. Grippe; "he will infer the fact that I proposed to state. Any special letters? No? Well, come into my room; I have something to say to you."

Wailes followed his senior into the inner office. Mr. Grippe took his accustomed seat, opened a drawer, and took out half a dozen pestiferous cigarettes, which he laid in a row upon his desk, within easy reach of his hand. Trump was alarmed, as he had learned the tricks of Mr. Grippe's asthma, and knew there would be some agitating discussion to follow so formidable a preparation.

"I think of sending you to — to — New York," he began. "No, hang it! that won't do either — say St. Petersburg. We have an unsettled account there — Paul Snickemoff."

"Remittance came this morning," answered Wailes.

"Ah, indeed! So much the better. Well, Corfu will do."

"What is the matter, Mr. Grippe?" said Wailes.

"You are such a reckless vagabond that I had better not tell you. Give me a match, please. Puff, puff! Will you go at once if I tell you?"

"Certainly, sir," replied Wailes. "I will go if you wish it, without explanations."

"Well, then," said Grippe, producing a paper, "here is a telegram I received last night. It is from — no matter whom. It says that Belgian rogue is in England, and has come purposely to kill the man who left him at Amiens. What are you grinning about? I have had no sleep all night trying to devise some plan to get you away."

"Poor Blauvelt will not harm me, Mr. Grippe," said Wailes; "he is in the hospital two streets off, and dying. I did not tell you yesterday, because I saw you were agitated enough, but it was Blauvelt who was with Podd at Beechwood, and who was throttled by the dog. Doctor Maguire says his hurts are certainly fatal. Who sends the telegram?"

"The same fellow who notified us of his forgery. Are you sure he is going to die? Well, that's kind of him, anyhow. As we got back the money, and as he failed to kill you, I think we are bound to forgive him — that is if he dies."

"I am saddened when I think of his family. He has a pretty young wife —"

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"And a mother-in-law," said Mr. Grippe; "and the mother-in-law is the very person that let out the secret of his intended vengeance. She was under great obligations to you because you had aided her at Calais. She had about five pounds of 'tabac' in her bag, which you lugged ashore under the noses of the French officials. You are a nice young man, to smuggle 'tabac' into France!"

"I thought the bag was heavy," said Trump. "Well, Sir, when shall I start for Corfu?"

"Dash Corfu!" replied Mr Grippe. "What the mischief do you want in Corfu?"

"You mentioned it, sir," said Trump, meekly.

"No matter if I did. I am far from well, Wailes; I shall not live over a month. I have had several warnings. Smoked ten of these things last night. I'll go out like a snuff some night."

"I hope not, sir," said Wailes, sympathetically. "Doctor Maguire says you will live forty years with your asthma—"

"Dash Maguire!" replied the banker; "what does he know about asthma? He says it is a 'disease of the fifth pair,' and wants to physic me with antimony; he'd fix me in forty minutes! I tell you my life hangs by a thread, and any sudden irritation would carry me off like a flash. Another match, please."

"Can I do anything to avert so great a calamity?" said Wailes, who began to expect some astounding proposition.

"Exactly. You can make my few remaining days as placid as possible, if you will just oblige me in a small matter—"

"Let me know your wishes, Mr. Grippe. I owe you too much to refuse you, no matter what you ask. What shall I do for you, sir?"

"Get married!" gasped the banker. "Puff, puff! Ah! this is a famous attack; I could die in two minutes! If you will just take a wife—a lovely girl—will make you happy—I have her now at Halidon. There! there! don't speak! Run out now; I will call you when this frightful spasm is over. Get out! confound you!"

Trump sat down at his own desk, stunned; the proposition was so sudden. Did Mr. Grippe wish to have him married right off, without any sort of preparation or warning? What would she say? he had not said a word to her. Could it be possible that the banker had arranged matters with her without consulting him? The thing was too absurd! Really, it was very indecorous in Mr. Grippe, though it was all intended in kindness. What a jolly old brick he was, to be sure! It would be dastardly to keep him in suspense if he was really set upon the thing. Confound that asthma!

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"Come in again," said Mr. Grippe; "I have found transient relief. Wailes, I have very special reasons, which you would appreciate if you knew them, to hasten this affair. It will relieve me of a load of responsibility that is frightful. What do you say?"

"I cannot say anything, sir, until I find out the lady's sentiments—"

"Sentiments be blowed!" said Mr. Grippe, rudely; "sentiments are not the trouble. It is settlements; and I promise you that these shall be satisfactory."

"But, Mr. Grippe," persisted Trump, "there are certain proprieties which one must observe. You cannot snap up a lady at a moment's notice and marry her whether she will or no. It is customary to do some preliminary courting —"

"Certainly, you may court as much as you like. All I want is your promise to marry the girl — well, say in two weeks, or three. You can get dresses and things in a week; special license, of course."

"Really I am at a loss, Mr. Grippe," said Trump, slowly; "yet I think I may promise, if Miss Grahame should accept —"

"Miss Grahame! Miss Devil's grandaunt! You infernal young villain! you are making a consistent member of the Church of England very nearly swear. I am not talking of Miss Grahame."

"May I ask what lady you referred to?" said Wailes.

"Heloïse, of course, you great booby! Miss Grahame! Why, Miss Grahame has not a penny in the world."

"Heloïse!" said Trump, white with rage; "the devil's grandaunt's grandmother! Heloïse! Oh you may swear at me for the next two weeks, Mr. Grippe; and I will engage to swear back so long as you propose so monstrous an absurdity! Ah! that infernal poison you smoke has turned your brain." And he strode about the office like a caged hyena.

"Will you please take a seat?" said Mr. Grippe. "We can certainly discuss the matter without making fools of ourselves. Allow me to ask if you did not refer to a young woman whom you supposed to be at Halidon, when you first came here?"

"Yes, sir, I did," answered Trump, promptly.

"And did you mean Heloïse then?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"And how the devil did you know anything about Mabel, who had only arrived one day before, and whom you had never seen?"

"I beg your pardon," said Trump, beside himself with disappointment and intoxicated with old memories —"I beg your pardon, but I had seen her, and held her in these arms. Ah! what am I saying!

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The fumes of this horrible stuff have affected *my* brain also. May I open a window?"

"Certainly not," replied Grippe, watching him with sleepless vigilance; "do you wish to kill me? What is all that about holding Mabel in your arms?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Wailes, in confusion; "please forget that I said that. I had met Miss Grahame before she came to Gloucester at all, and — I am telling you this in strict confidence, Mr. Grippe — I had fully determined that I would never marry any other woman. Please don't ask me any more questions, sir."

"But this arms business," persisted Grippe, "that *must* be explained. As much confidence as you like, but no half confidences."

There was no help for it. Trumpley told the story of Mabel's arrival in the wrecked train, of her accident and rescue, and of her sudden departure from Rose Cottage, her arrival at Gloucester the next day, and his conclusion that she was Mr. Grippe's adopted daughter.

"And now, Mr. Grippe," concluded Trump, "I have told you all this with less reluctance, because I know you will deal kindly with me. For some reason Miss Grahame avoided and repelled me: do not ask her why. She has intimated her readiness to explain to me, and in due time I will ask her, with your permission. You know all about yesterday's adventure. I intended to ask your consent before I spoke to her at all, because I cannot trust myself. If I begin to talk to her I shall certainly ask her to be my wife —"

"What the devil do you want?" said Mr. Grippe fiercely, as Mr. Choppy appeared at the door.

"Beg pardon, sir," said Mr. Choppy, "but here is a telegram, marked 'immediate.' I thought I had better bring it. I knocked twice."

Mr. Grippe took the despatch and read it, and Mr. Choppy discreetly withdrew. The banker laid the paper on his desk.

"Go on, Mr. Wailes," he said.

"I only had to say, sir, that I must also see Mr. Grahame before I speak to his daughter. That is another reason why I have not accepted your kind invitations to Halidon."

"And you have overturned all my plans," said Mr. Grippe. "I had made a draft of my will, confound you! I had left you something, which you would have inherited in a week or two, for you have shortened my life, you mule! And you would have relieved me of the care of this great, bouncing French vixen — I mean my dear

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daughter — and Mr. Grahame's address is number ten, River street, Blackfriars, and this telegram is from De Lisle, who begs me to send you to London at once, to help him unearth some villainy of Blauvelt's — and the train will start at noon, so get out — the devil take you! Good-bye! I'll tell Clinton."

CHAPTER LXIV.

CROSSER.

The Reverend Edward Grahame had a pensioner named Kirby. If he ever had a regular Christian name it had been lost in his youth, and he was known among his congeners by the name of "Soak Kirby," which had probably been earned by years of patient application to gin, and by a physical idiosyncrasy which enabled him to imbibe and absorb unusual quantities of that liquid without previous preparation or notice. Mr. Kirby's ostensible occupation was that of a coal-heaver, but being afflicted with several varieties of pulmonary disease, and always in a dying condition, his present business was washing bottles and tumblers in a tap-room near Mr. Grahame's chapel. He took his wages in a fluid form, and was chronically impecunious. There was something frightful in the relentless and tyrannical sway exercised by Soak over the gentle parson, who was constantly impressed by the conviction that his pensioner was a huge fraud, and as constantly filled with self-reproach for his harsh judgment. Soak kept a dismal cough somewhere in his manly bosom, which he evoked at pleasure. It was ventriloquial, and seemed to come from some unknown depths in his organism, and threatened instant dissolution. It was sepulchral, ragged, hideous, shaking his gin-soaked carcase. He had a theory, often expressed, that his trunk was a vast chasm, the vital organs of respiration torn into shreds, and his heart dwindled to the dimensions of a hickory-nut, and within this cavern the cough raved and rattled.

On the day succeeding Mr. Grippe's stormy interview with Wailes, Mr. Kirby was ushered into Mr. Grahame's study. There was a tacit understanding that gave him right of entry upon all occasions, and Mr. Grahame laid aside his sermon to entertain his visitor. "Well, Kirby," said he, "how are you to-day? Take a seat."

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Mr. Kirby looked around the room, searching for some place to bestow his hat. It was a very dilapidated hat, with a black band upon it. Mr. Kirby, fortunately for Mrs. K., was a widower. He found a flower-stand at last, with some plants of Mabel's upon it, and deposited his ornamental tile among the flowers.

"Ugh! ugh!" answered Soak, "cough wuss; tore me to bits last night. Doctor says I must have some sherry."

"Sherry?" said Mr. Grahame. "How much sherry, Kirby?"

"Quart."

"I'll see the Doctor, Kirby—"

"No, you won't! 'T'ant our doctor; swell doctor from west-end. Saw me 'xpiring in the gutter. Got out of his shay and sounded my lungs. Guv me arf-crown and drove away. Spent the arf-crown in sherry, accordin' to horders. All gone. Ugh! ugh!"

In the midst of Kirby's paroxysm another visitor was announced. He followed the servant into the study, and she, depositing the newcomer's card upon the writing-desk, gave him a chair and departed.

"Excuse me a moment, sir," said the Parson courteously. "Kirby, I will see you later in the day; I must ask Doctor Smith about the sherry. I don't believe it is good for you."

"Not a-goin' to have Doctor Smith foolin' round me," said Soak, viciously; "his last dose nigh finished me. Never mind, sir, I'll git along. Don't want no cheap sherry neither! Swell doctor said I must git it from Fortnum & Mason's — four-and-six a bottle."

"Well, well," said Mr. Grahame, "I'll see about it. You can go now."

"Won't have to worrit much longer with me, sir," said Soak, regaining his hat and shuffling to the door. "Ugh! ugh! cough rackin' my vitals. Swell doctor says I may go off any minnit. Ugh! ugh!"

"Stop, Kirby — four-and-six, you say? Let me see if I have it — yes. I'm very dubious about it though. Good morning."

Mr. Kirby made a sweeping bow, including Mr. Grahame and the later visitor, and banged the door after him.

"And now, sir," said the Parson, "I am at your service. You will pardon me for keeping you waiting, but I make it a rule to give my poor parishioners the first attention."

While he spoke, Mr. Grahame was hunting the card, which he had slipped in between two leaves of the unfinished sermon.

"The apology is due from me, sir," said the gentleman, "for interrupting you. But I return to Gloucester this evening and—"

"Want sixpence more," said Mr. Kirby, reappearing. "Homnibus Helephant and the Cawsil; 'nother bus to Piccadilly."

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The gentleman quietly put a shilling in the dying man's hand. The effect was electrical. Here was a new swell throwing shillings about like dirt. Kirby sunk into a chair near the door, dropped the cherished hat upon the floor, and coughed five minutes while he reflected.

"It cuts me to the 'art, sir," he said gloomily, when he regained his voice, "to take money from Mr. Gram. The calls he has upon him is amazin', and mostly himpostors, I dessay."

"Very likely," answered the stranger, dryly.

"Yessir; that's what I says. Now when a ginwine case comes up—"

"Like the present," suggested the gentleman.

"Zactly. Then Parson cawnt do justis to his own feelinks. 'Cause why? 'Cause money's already used up on some wot aint worthy. And I says—"

"If you will go to the omnibus-stand and wait for me, I will rejoin you presently," said the gentleman. "I am going to the Elephant and Castle too."

While this dialogue was progressing, Mr. Grahame was industriously seeking the visitor's card. He had seen the girl place it on the edge of the desk. He may have brushed it off. Yes, there it is in the waste-basket. As Kirby retired the second time, Mr. Grahame regained the card and glanced at the name.

"Mr. Radcliffe Merton."

The visitor approached the Parson with a smiling countenance. He was met by a front of stern dignity that was appalling.

"Your address was kindly furnished by Mr. Grippe," said the young gentleman, "from whom I would have brought credentials if time had served. I left Gloucester very suddenly."

Mr. Grahame bowed.

"I scarcely know how to say what is on my mind, sir," continued the visitor, chilled by the other's manner. "Coming thus unannounced, it seems indecorous to tell you that I admire your daughter and have come to ask your consent—"

"Stop, if you please, sir!" said Mr. Grahame. "You can say nothing to me about my daughter that will be agreeable to me. If you have no other business, it will hardly be necessary for me to detain you longer. Good morning, sir."

Trump gazed with blank amazement at the frowning face of Mabel's father. There was an aromatic odor of gin in the apartment, left by the suffering Soak, and the thought flitted through Trump's mind that the Reverend Edward was inebriated.

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"I cannot affect to misunderstand you, sir," said Wailes, slowly, "but I am sure there is some strange mistake —"

"No mistake, sir, except on your part. My daughter can never have authorised this visit, which —"

"Certainly not, sir," answered Trump. "I have scarcely spoken to Miss Grahame. I refrained purposely until I could see you and tell you my condition and prospects."

"Really, sir, I am not interested in the matter. I have weighty reasons for declining intercourse with you and with all your kindred. It is painful to say so, but you compel me."

"I leave you, sir," said Trump, his head thrown back and his frank eyes blazing. "I say only two words: if this is a mistake, I shall be rejoiced to know it; if not, neither I nor my kindred will ever trouble you or your kindred again. Good morning, sir!"

Trump found Soak waiting at the stand. The invalid was propped up against a lamp-post, gasping.

"You infernal old cheat!" said Trump, "if you dare to bark at me with that fraudulent cough again, I'll call a policeman and give you in custody. Do you suppose you can impose upon me, with rum exuding from all your pores? Get out, you villain!"

As the 'bus rolled away with this truculent youth, Soak took the shilling he had given from his pocket, examined it intently, bit it, and still dubious, dived into a gin-shop and changed it incontinently.

Mr. Grahame resumed his seat at the desk, and pulled his sermon before him, dipped his pen in the ink and finished the sentence which Kirby had interrupted.

"A fine state of mind I am in," said he, "for sermonising. Now that fellow would deceive any one with his frank, bright smile and bold eyes. I was attracted to him when he came in. He has the impudence of the — the Radcliffe Mertons of all ages! To come here the second time, after my blank refusal to see him only the other day! I threw his card in the waste-basket there, and here goes the other. I don't think I shall have a third."

He set himself resolutely at his task, wrote to the bottom of the page, dried it on the blotter and turned over a new leaf. A card dropped out.

"Eh!" said the Parson; "what is this? 'Harold Trumpley Wailes!' Where did it come from? Bless my heart! it is the card Jenny put upon the desk, as sure as a gun! And I have been saying the most insulting things to that gallant youngster — the son of my old friend, the nephew of my brother-in-law! Jenny!"

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Jenny was exchanging amatory chaff with the baker's young man at the area-rails, and did not hear.

"Jenny! Confound the girl! Jenny!"

"Coming, sir," answered Jenny. "Get away with you, Mr. Crust; Mr. Grahame don't allow no young men about here."

"Jenny, how in the world did you put this card in the sermon? Is this the card the gentleman gave you?"

"Yes, sir; you pushed it in the sermont yourself. I seed you doin' it while Soak was coughin'."

"Did I?" answered the Parson, meekly. "Well, well! I am going to the Elephant and Castle, and then to the bank. Dear me, what a dreadful mistake! I don't know how long I shall be absent, but hope to be back by dinner-time."

The Parson's chase was fruitless; no sign of Trump at the Elephant and Castle. Messrs. Smith, Payne and Smith were Mr. Grippe's correspondents; he would inquire there. Mr. Wailes? Yes; he had been there. Was at Charing Cross Hotel. By underground railway to the big hotel. Mr. Wailes had gone. Was going back to Gloucester. No doubt had taken the last train.

Mr. Grahame was quite tired when he got back to his sermon. He dined frugally; then the postman came with a letter from his darling — eight pages.

That night Mr. Grahame packed his portmanteau, and the next day's train took him to Gloucester.

CHAPTER LXV.

A Confession.

Boldly disregarding the injunctions and deriding the prognosis of the faculty, Mr. Clinton mounted the pony-phaeton, driving with his left hand, and proceeded to Merton Park on the same day that Mr. Grahame spent in hunting Mr. Wailes. When the latter was giving Soak Kirby his parting benison, Clinton was passing through the Park gates. The Squire received him uproariously. He had yesterday's *Times*, and the paper contained a communication which Clinton must see. It was about Dorado.

"I have read it, Mr. Merton," said Clinton; "but it gives me no new information."

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"No," answered Squire Mat; "but it confirms your hints. The whole thing is exploded."

"Of course. I tried to impress you with my doubts the other day; but you were so confident."

"Sold out!" said the Squire, poking him in the ribs. "Come in; the girls are somewhere. What ails your arm? Oh yes; Maguire told me. I did not half understand him, but I think he said you were chasing some burglars, and fell down and trod on it. Hillo! Lucy! Baby! Where are you?"

"Here, Papa," answered Sybil. "Oh, Mr. Clinton! I am glad to see you out. The doctor said you were in great distress — starving with a giant appetite. I will get you some luncheon —"

"But I am on strict diet, Miss Sybil," said Clinton; "the doctor restricts me to 'tay and toast.' It is terribly thin aliment too."

"We have the remnant of a grouse-pie," replied Sybil, thoughtfully. "We had luncheon half-an-hour ago. Do you think you could venture to take just a little?"

"He did not forbid grouse-pie specifically," said Clinton; "and if the remnant is not too large, and you will carve for me — I am lame, you see —"

"Come into the dining-room. Papa, where is the port? Mr. Clinton will take some —"

"Not a drop; wine *is* forbidden. Just a morsel of the pie and a mug of beer; and then if you will take me a little drive, you will earn my lasting gratitude."

"We are going to Halidon presently," said Sybil, with a blush; "but Lucy and Papa can go in the carriage, and I can drive the ponies. May I, Papa?"

"Certainly, Baby. Clinton, I am plagued about that confounded stock. The poor fellow that bought it was just in time to lose his entire outlay. I went after Consol to get the fellow's address, but the blockhead would tell me nothing — might as well talk to a stone wall. I thought I would divide the loss, anyhow."

"How much was it, Squire?" said Clinton, innocently.

"Twenty-five hundred."

"When did you sell?"

"On the same day — two days ago."

"Oh, then," said Clinton, "set your mind at rest. I think I know the buyer. You must not ask me any questions, but I may tell you he will not lose a penny. Is that what you call a remnant, Miss Sybil? It is like the mighty pastry of the old romances."

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"Papa tells of a tenant of his who always takes his beer in a gallon measure. The reason he gives is that 'he can drink as little as he likes.'"

"There is a sequel to the story," answered Clinton; "you promised to carve for me."

"I did not promise:"

"Cruel! Look at my arm."

The Squire departed to order the carriage and find his elder daughter. Mr. Clinton attacked the remnant. Between the mouthfuls he glanced at Sybil like a cannibal. She did not manifest the least trepidation, but quietly replenished his plate as fast as he emptied it. At last there was no remnant.

"I think I should like to prolong the feast about six weeks," said Clinton; "that is, if my arm would keep useless and you would carve for me—"

"And the supply of remnants were larger," said Sybil. "I would get you something more, but I really think you have had enough for an invalid; and now I will get my hat."

"You are a regular angel, Miss Sybil," said Clinton, fervently. "I have not had so glorious a feed for a year. Oh, what a barren waste this earth would be without gentle woman—"

"And grouse," said Sybil.

When the carriage turned into the highroad, Clinton proposed that they should go by Rose Cottage, up by the mill-road, and through the lane back to Halidon. The Squire and Miss Merton preferred the road to the narrow lanes, so Clinton and Sybil took the longer route. Sybil drove.

"I should have your seat," she said as the ponies trotted away.

"But my wounded arm is on that side."

"Well?"

"Well, if you were about to fall out, I should require my sound arm to catch you," and he gave her another cannibal glance.

Rose Cottage had already gotten a deserted look; the blinds were closed and the flowers drooping.

"Ho, Baby!" said Clinton, addressing the off filly; "trot more slowly! We shall be there too soon."

"Where?" said Sybil.

"To a place I wish to show you. I am making up a story. I have a confession to make to you."

Sybil began to feel some trepidation. The grouse-pie had infused new life into the American, and his big eyes devoured her with so grisly an appetite that she trembled.

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"Here is the mill; and there is the kennel. You will fear the dog no more, Miss Sybil. Turn to the right. Gently, Baby! Ah, Baby! you are spoiled."

"Where is the dog?" said Sybil.

"Dead; and by my hand. His fate has been sealed since you told me about him. I came down here once to kill him, but he was chained up and I could not bear to shoot him. But yesterday the fates favored me, and he came at me, free."

"And hurt your arm," said Sybil, horrified. "Somehow I knew the doctor was not telling the truth about you, but — but I did not like to ask —"

"Why not?" said Clinton, trying to see her eyes.

"Because I — it was not polite to express a doubt. Did he bite your arm?"

"No; he did not touch me. Ho! Baby. Stop here, Miss Sybil; this is the scene of my story. Turn their heads across the lane and they will be quiet, nibbling the hedge."

Sybil, her heart beating, knowing by unerring intuition what was coming, feeling that a good, quiet cry in her own chamber would be *so* nice, sat like a statue by his side while he told his story.

"Sybil," he began, with tender gravity, "you need not be told I love you; you have known that many days. But, loving you, I cannot deceive you; and when you hear all my story, if you give me no answer, I will go back to America.

"Your Cousin Radcliffe and I are old enemies. We quarrelled years ago in Germany; we fought there, and he wounded me desperately. Since my recovery I have been hunting him to kill him. When I came here I learned that you were destined for him, and I sought you out to save you from so horrible a fate as a life-long union with him. But I found you so sweet and good that I loved you before I could give any warnings.

"Mrs. Wailes revealed to me the true nature of my hatred of Merton. It was wicked, and my purposes were mean; and so I resolved at last to molest him no more, to let him court you if he would, and to have no renewal of my quarrel on any terms.

"Two days ago we met here. Do you see how the grass is trampled? By a curious accident we were both armed, and he assaulted me just here, sword in hand.

"I could have killed him twenty times, but I had sworn to spare him, and I did. At last with devilish cunning he spoke disrespectfully of you — of you, my darling — and then I forgot myself and my better purposes, and resolved to kill him.

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"He escaped death by a half-miracle. It was not skill that saved him, but desperate hardihood. In order to kill me he boldly faced almost certain death, and in passing his sword through my arm, he threw up my point and escaped with a scratch.

"You have heard that Wailes and I chased some thieves out of Beechwood grounds and into this lane. We were armed with the swords, and they were left out here in the lane when we took the wounded Frenchman in. I returned for the weapons, found one, and met Radcliffe here armed with the other. It looked like the decree of fate.

"And now he is gone; he is in France, and will not return. I have never believed it possible that you could marry him, and I have dreamed that you might some day marry me. Sybil, I will not distress you by pressing an unwelcome suit. I know I am not worthy of you — you, so good, and I so rude and wicked. But if you would allow me to love you, and would continue to humanise me by your gentle admonitions, perhaps — in time — you would forget that I was an American that could not talk good English —"

"I never said that!" interrupted Sybil.

"Did you not? Well, Mabel did."

"Mabel?"

"Mabel Grahame. Don't you know? She is my cousin."

"Ah!" said Sybil, coldly.

"And she will be nearer still to me, I hope; for I intend her to marry my dear friend Wailes. Oh, Sybil! I was afraid you might like him; he is so gallant a fellow."

"I *do* like him," said Sybil, spitefully.

"Ah! but I meant — love. Oh, Sybil, it will be terrible to put the broad ocean between you and me! But I am resolved; if you tell me you cannot love me —"

"I am not falling out, Mr. Clinton! You need not hold me."

"Forgive me; I did not know what I was doing."

"Mr. Clinton, I think you are deceiving yourself. I think you really love Another —"

"Sybil!"

"I mean grouse-pie. Behave, sir! How dare you squeeze my poor arm! There, you may love me — till your arm gets well; and I'll — ask Papa if I may — love you a little!"

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CHAPTER LXVI.

The Last Another.

On the next day — alas! it is the last day — there was an impromptu dinner-party at Halidon. Mr. Dipperly did not officiate this time, as the banker had decided to have the feast very suddenly, and issued his invitations the same morning. Squire Merton and his daughters; Mr. Clinton and Mr. Wailes, to escort Mrs. Dora Trumpley; that is, to follow the Halidon carriage, which was sent for her. It was a business-dinner. Mr. Grippe had a communication to make, in which some of the guests were interested. The Squire was invited, because he was the "friend of the family." Before the feast was spread, Mrs. Wailes, Mrs. Trumpley and Mabel attended Mr. Grippe in the library, where the will was read and discussed. The effect upon Dora was precisely contrary to Mr. Grippe's expectations. Instead of being agitated, she was calmed by the assurance of her husband's fidelity and affection. And this was due in great measure to Clinton's judicious explanation of many mysteries, and the testimony of the old letters written to his mother from Maison Rouge. He had spent the morning in earnest debate with his aunt, and she was prepared for the confirmation afforded by the will. The burden of grief and mortification which she had endured twenty years, was all removed, and gave place to tender memories. The only sign of weakness she gave was in clinging to Mabel, who was present at this preliminary reading, at Dora's urgent solicitation.

"Do not leave me, darling," she whispered, when they parted to dress for dinner; "come with me to my room; you and Edith both."

"My room is your room, Dora," said Mrs. Wailes. "I was put over the South Terrace before we knew, or before Mr. Grippe knew of your existence."

"We will be on either side of you, Aunt Dora," said Mabel; "the three chambers are *en suite*."

"I am only a guest, Edith," replied Dora. "I have promised De Witt, Beechwood will be my home while I live. I could not bear to stay here. We will talk of this hereafter, Mabel; you will stay by me, will you not?"

"Yes, while you are here. But I cannot live with you at Beechwood."

"Why not?" said Dora, as they ascended the staircase.

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"Because De Witt has engaged Another!"

The dinner was in progress when a new guest arrived, and threw the entire company into dire confusion. He had come by the late train from London. Mabel flew at him on his entrance, clung to his neck, laughing and crying, and beside herself for joy. Dora, who sat at Mr. Grippe's right hand, greeted him warmly; the ready tears that filled her eyes drawn forth by the contrast between Daisy's comely husband, and the gray-haired parson, worn by years of toil in Blackfriars. Room was made for him between his daughter and sister, and the great business of life was resumed. Clinton sat by Sybil, who exhorted him occasionally to remember the grouse-pie, and moderate his voracious appetite. He was still left-handed and helpless. Trumpley, who had not exchanged words with Mabel, sat at the end of the long table silent and grave. The sudden appearance of Mr. Grahame spoiled his appetite.

The red Burgundy came in due time, but, warned by Clinton, Mr. Grippe did not mention the name. The American opened the door for the egress of the ladies. One glass of wine followed, and then Mr. Merton proposed joining the better part of creation. The Squire was longing for the whist-table, and there had to be the conclave in the library first.

Mr. Grahame had not seen Trump. He was the first to leave the dining-room, and when the entire company was assembled in the library, the Parson found himself opposite the handsome youth to whom he had offered so sore an affront the previous day. No chance to speak now; Mr. Grippe was spreading the will out before him, and clearing his throat for a preliminary speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "the paper I hold was entrusted to my care by the writer the day before his death. It is his last will and testament. The provisions it contains are peculiar, and I never have been able to comply with them until now. To Mr. Harold Trumpley, I am under obligations that my entire fortune could not repay; I owe my life and honor to him. And I have called you all here to aid me to discover the exact wishes of Mr. Trumpley as herein set forth, because the chief purpose of my life is to fulfill these wishes to the letter."

This was said with grave dignity, and Mr. Grippe proceeded to read the will. When it was finished, the banker requested Squire Merton to favor him with his opinion.

"There can be but one opinion, Mr. Grippe," said the Squire, promptly. "Mrs. Dora Lennox Trumpley inherits all and singular."

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"I think not," said Dora, gently.

"Why not, Aunt Dora?" said Clinton.

"Because there was evidently a desire in my husband's mind that the son of Edith Trumpley should inherit Halidon."

"That was my judgment, Madam," said Mr. Grippe, "until two or three days ago, when I learned that you were living. The knowledge that Mr. Trumpley Wailes probably, nay, certainly as I thought, would inherit Halidon, hastened the formation of our partnership. I am glad to add," he continued, bowing to Trump, "that the connexion is a great gain and comfort to me. Mr. Wailes has displayed the most remarkable abilities, and I do not know the man in England for whom I would exchange him."

"There is a condition annexed to his inheritance," said Mrs. Wailes; "he must relinquish his father's name —"

"Which I will never do!" said Trump, speaking for the first time.

"Not for Halidon?" said Dora, looking with admiration at his kindling eyes.

"Not for all England!"

"The difficulty is not insurmountable," said Mr. Grippe.

"I think it is," said Clinton; "my acquaintance with Wailes has been tolerably intimate of late, and of all the —"

"What?" said everybody, when he paused.

"I was trying to find English words to express my meaning, but I can't, the vocabulary is limited; I must say it in American."

"Out with it!" said Trump.

"Well then, of all the obstinate, mule-headed suckers I ever met or read about, Wailes is the worst! Now, try your experiment, Mr. Grippe, and see if I am right."

"I was going to suggest," resumed Mr. Grippe, "that Mr. Wailes need not relinquish his name. He has only to add 'Oswald Trumpley' to his present name —"

"Which is to relinquish my birthright," said Trumpley; "I will certainly never do it. But there is a more serious obstacle still."

"What is it?" said the banker.

"My uncle has twice stated there in forcible terms his desire that Aunt Dora should inherit positively. The reference to the heirs of my mother is only a provision against a contingency that has not arisen. Aunt Dora lives, and her title is unimpeachable. But if she had died, I could not inherit Halidon."

"I do not understand you," said Mr. Grippe.

"Because Mrs. Harold Trumpley has nearer kindred than I. If

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she should die intestate, her property would go to Mr. Clinton, and — and Another."

"Yoicks!" said Squire Mat, "the boy has put us on the true scent. My dear Mrs. Trumpley, let us settle this at once, and get to the whist-table. Make your will, leaving the property to Clinton and Another. If Clinton has a grain of sense"— and the Squire winked furiously—"there won't be Another long; there will be only One. Ho, ho, ho!"

"There is a serious obstacle in that direction also," said Mabel, malignantly scowling at Sybil. "Mr. Clinton has his eye upon a different Another."

"I'll have nothing to do with your confounded property!" said Clinton, in a rage. "There is no such thing as Another. Mrs. Wailes said so: did she not, Wailes?"

Trump winced and remained silent.

"We shall have to postpone the consideration of the question, I suppose," said Mr. Grippe, rising. "Ladies and gentlemen, will you oblige me by remaining at Halidon another day? We will resume the discussion to-morrow night, and in the meantime pray reflect upon the matter. Mrs. Wailes, will you please take the Squire's arm and lead him to the drawing-room? He is dying for whist."

"Mr. Clinton," said Miss Lucy, catching his sound arm as he passed with Sybil; "will you please excuse me, but I see such a striking resemblance."

"Where? What?" said Clinton, aghast.

"Don't you remember," said Miss Lucy, her eye sailing into its accustomed corner; "don't you remember when Papa was carving the goose at dinner, that he could not pull the skewer out of the wing? And when you were sitting there, looking so sheepishly at Sybil, I thought — your arm being pinned down to your side — that you resembled that excellent fowl."

"That is true, Sister," said Sybil, delighted; "the man is a regular goose!"

"And you are Another, dear," said Lucy, sailing after Mrs. Wailes, while her eye came back.

Mr. Grahame gave his arm to Dora, Mabel clinging to the other, and the trio marched after Miss Lucy. When the Parson had seated the ladies, he returned to the library.

Mr. Grippe was folding the will. Trump was standing at the window, looking out upon the terrace. Mr. Grahame approached and laid his hand on his shoulder. Trump turned, and seeing who it was, recoiled a step.

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"Only a word, sir," said Mr. Grahame. "You will credit me when I tell you that I have not known a peaceful hour since I discovered my mistake."

"I do not understand you," said Trump, coldly.

"Ah! you pain me. Youth should be forgiving. Do you nurse resentment against an old man who made a blunder so utterly ridiculous that I can hardly explain —"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Grahame," said Trump, composedly, "there could be no mistake. Nothing has occurred since you so emphatically declined my acquaintance to change our relations. I am not accustomed to compliments of that sort, and while I nurse no resentment, I beg to say that I accept your decision."

"And you can never forgive —"

"There is nothing to forgive, sir. If there is — or if you think there is — I do most heartily forgive you; but I am quite content to remain a stranger, for I cannot forget."

"I took you for Radcliffe Merton," said Mr. Grahame; "his card was on my desk, and I thought it was yours. If I had known you were Trumpley Wailes, the man who saved Mabel, do you think I could have spoken such words?"

"Oh, forgive me, Mr. Grahame," said Trump, as a flood of happiness swept over his soul, "and let me explain —"

"I will hear nothing, sir," said Mr. Grahame, sternly. "If you have apologies to make, you must make them to Another. Mabel! come here!"

And she came.

"Go out on the terrace with my friend, Mabel. Mr. Wailes, I will confirm whatever she says."

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE TRUMP-HOLDER.

Mr. Grahame entered the drawing-room and took the seat vacated by Mabel, and was soon engaged in earnest conversation with Dora. Mr. Clinton was playing whist, having stipulated that Sybil should shuffle, cut, deal, and arrange his cards for him. He was guilty of revokes and blunders that thoroughly exasperated the amiable Squire, who was his partner, and drew from him emphatic expostulations

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that would have been furious if Baby had not held him in check with uplifted finger; and as the good father slowly recognised the relations subsisting betwixt Sybil and Clinton, he became more placid, winking violently at Lucy whenever Clinton made a new blunder.

Mabel, rather surprised at her father's summons, yet yielding prompt obedience, accepted Trumpley's offered arm, and stepped out with him upon the terrace. Orion was just heaving his huge bulk above the horizon, and the stars in his belt and scabbard glittered in the eastern sky.

Mr. Grippe put away the will. He hobbled to the door of the drawing-room, and found all his guests enjoying themselves. Then he hobbled to the terrace door, which was ajar; Trump and Mabel were promenading. Mr. Grippe hobbled round to the oriel window jutting out upon the terrace, and hidden by the heavy curtains, he seated himself there and peeped feloniously.

"I have not seen Mademoiselle," said Wailes, after he had counted the steps from one end of the terrace to the other: there were eighteen.

"Heloïse went to Paris this morning," answered Mabel. "Sir Henry Walton pressed her so earnestly that Mr. Grippe consented. Lady Walton and Algernon were here too, and joined in the plea."

"Algernon?" said Trump, jealously. "That is the young gentleman who took you down to dinner that time?"

"What time?" said Mabel, innocently.

"Oh, you know well enough," said Wailes; "he was quite devoted too. I thought his glances would melt the heart of a stone."

"Alas!" replied Mabel, "it did not last. When the *omelette soufflée* came in, his glances and his heart centered on that; and now he is dying for Heloïse."

"And you have not told me why you fled from Rose Cottage," said Trump, suddenly. "Do you know I have been tortured with the apprehension that I drove you away."

"I told Mrs. Wailes — did she not tell you?"

"Not a word."

"Why did you look so — so ill-natured to-night?" said Mabel. "You bowed so elaborately when I came in that I thought I must have offended you again."

"Again?"

"Yes. Were you not offended when I passed you in the station at Gloucester, and when I met you in the cathedral?"

"Offended?" answered Trump. "No; I was bewildered, mor-

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tified, wounded; yet I was sure you had a reason. Will you tell me now?"

"On the morning after you saved me from drowning, and while I was thinking how I could best show my gratitude to you, the servant brought a letter. It was addressed to Radcliffe Merton, and I thought you were he."

"Ha!" said Wailes, "what fatality has made that man my evil genius! Your father drove me from his house yesterday, having made the same mistake."

"I had heard of this bad man, and the history of his bad parents, and my father had charged me to avoid all intercourse with him at any risk. So when I thought you were he — oh, how cruel! — I fled. I did not tell Mr. Grippe; I did not tell any one, not even my dear father, about my accident until I discovered my mistake at the dinner that evening; and then *you* fled.

"What were you doing at Blackfriars?" — suddenly.

"I went to ask Mr. Grahame's consent to —"

"Do you know why I called for you when Merton was carrying me away?" she said, interrupting him. "I thought you had rescued me from death once, and to be held down by that villain's hands was worse than death. Somehow, I thought you would hear me."

Trump had her hand in his by this time, and was almost crushing it.

"Hear you! Oh, Mabel! I have heard your voice crying 'Save me!' constantly since the day I drew you out upon the bank. At night and in the daytime, in the thronged city and on the roadside, in the quiet lanes and on the rough waters of the Channel, always, everywhere, I heard you; and while you repulsed me, as you did at the cathedral, I still heard you, and longed to fly to you. At the dinner that terrible night I caught just one blessed glance from your dear eyes which told me the barriers between us were gone, and when I saw you again it was here, here," — and he stamped upon the terrace — "and Clinton was kissing your hand — this hand!" and he imitated Clinton's example on the spot. "Then I went away; I had to go, and I did not care to come back again. If I could not love you, could not devote my life to you, I could not find any prize in the present life worth a contest. How long the assurance that I had found you only to lose you again, oppressed my soul! But the other night Clinton told me of his kinship and of Sybil, and once more I could kiss this little curl, which I stole from you, poor child! when you were swooning —"

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"I saw you, sir," said Mabel, turning the violets up to him, with a dewdrop on each, glittering like diamonds in the starlight. Trump put them both on his moustache.

"And you have known, Mabel, all this time that I loved you, and could never love any other—"

"I heard you say so," answered she, softly, "when I was unconscious that day."

"And you have been willing that I should love you all the time?"

"No, no!" she said, with a shudder; "while I thought you were Merton, I was in deep distress, but I could not help remembering how brave and kind you were. I knew you—might love me if we met, and I did not dare to let you speak to me when I saw you in the cathedral; because I was afraid that while you talked to me I would forget who you were. I was more ready to think of your great service than of your evil reputation. Oh, how could I look at you and believe such things!

"I wrote everything to father two days ago. I told him of the railway accident, which I had concealed from him until then. Poor Father! Oh, Mr. Wailes! you do not know how noble, how self-denying, how tender and loving he is. When I came here, leaving him alone in dismal Blackfriars, what do you suppose induced him to let me come?"

"I cannot understand it," said Trump, gazing with rapture at the violets looking at him so trustfully, and trying to believe them while they said she loved him. "How any sane man who had the right to keep you would ever consent to part from you, passes my comprehension."

"Well, I will tell you; let us sit down here."

Mr. Harold Trumpley, in some of his oriental wanderings, had found two sofas made of bamboo twisted into a hundred folds by Japanese fingers, but holding two people very comfortably if they would sit close. These were placed at either end of the terrace, and the young people seemed to think they were large enough. Somehow in taking the seat Trump's arm got pinned between the back of the sofa and Mabel's belt.

"Father has a poor pensioner," she began, never dreaming of Trump's imprisoned arm, "named Kirby—"

Trump started, straightening his arm out, and then unconsciously bending it.

"Excuse me," he said. "Go on."

"Well, poor old Kirby has been a great sufferer for many years; he has no lungs whatever."

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"No," said Trump; "I should think not. I saw him, I suspect."

"Did you? Ah, then I know your kind heart would pity him. Poor Kirby! What did he say to you? and what did you do for him?"

"I cannot remember the exact conversation," said Trump, blushing safely under the stars. "We parted suddenly. Ah, my darling, I was thinking of you!"

"Well, poor Kirby was in great distress. Our money was all gone; none to come until next quarter-day, and then only a pittance. We would not borrow or incur debts, and I happened to see Mr. Grippe's advertisement for a companion for Heloïse, offering fifty guineas a year."

"Yes," said Trump, bending his arm a little more.

"It sounded like a fortune to us; it would buy so many delicacies for poor old Kirby's declining years. And so when I pleaded with Father for Kirby's sake, he consented. If it had not been for Kirby, you would not have risked your life to save mine — twice, twice!"

Trump's arm was a perfect semicircle now, and Mabel was so close to him that another person might easily have found room on the narrow sofa. She did not appear to know it though.

"If I live," said Trump, fervently, "to revisit Blackfriars, I will hunt up that gin-soaked old vagabond and feast him like a prince! I spoke roughly to him, my darling. My own Mabel, you have not said yet you loved me."

"Never mind the vagabonds; it is Kirby you must help, for Kirby sent me to you!"

"Yes," said Trump, deceitfully, "Kirby too."

Mr. Grippe was making frantic efforts to dance a three-legged dance without shaking the curtains — one sound leg, one defective leg, and his cane. The problem of the Halidon succession was being rapidly solved. From the drawing-room came the Squire's voice, roaring like Homer's Stentor, passing through walls and doors, and startling the couple on the terrace.

"Who the devil has got the Odd Trump?"

And while Mabel nestled closer to him, and while Grippe persisted in his saltatory efforts, she whispered —

"I think *I* have!"

And Trumpley stopped her mouth.

THE END.

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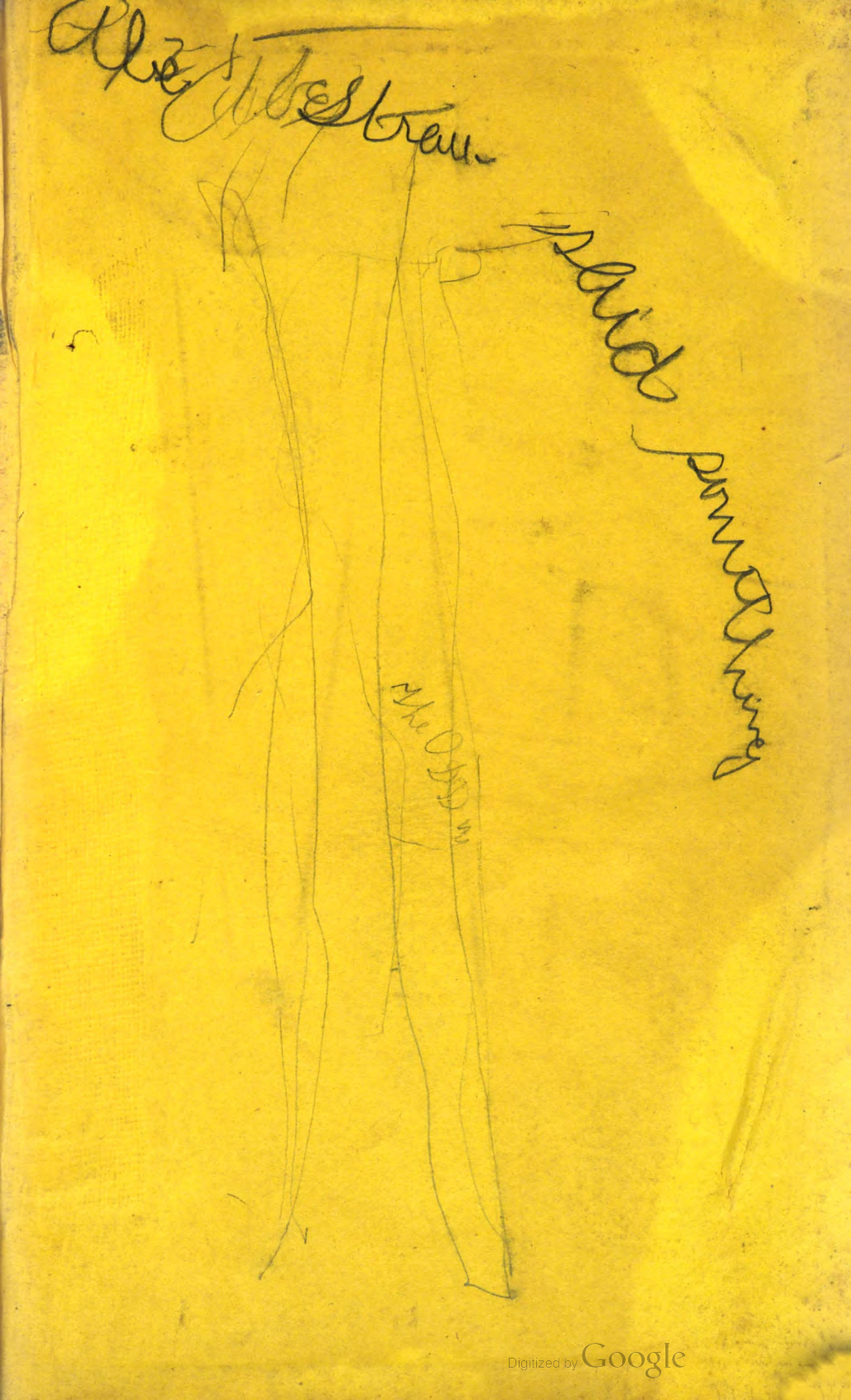

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